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MARVEL PREVIEW

# BIZARRE ADVENTURES 2

FANTASTIC NEW STORIES!
AMAZING NEW CHARACTERS!

by

John Buscema & Lynn Graeme · Gene Colan & Denny O'Neil
Frank Miller & Lynn Graeme · Jim Sherman & Roger Stern
Ned Sonntag & Steve Skeates · Gene Colan & Mike Barr

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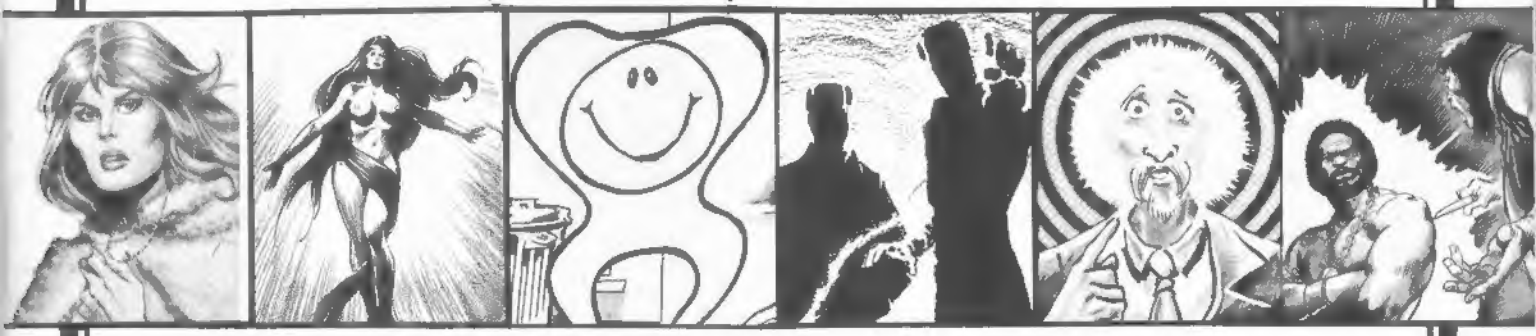
# STAN LEE presents:

# MARVEL PREVIEW featuring

# BIZARRE ADVENTURES 2



Fall 1980

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# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS...

**ALFREDO ALCALA,** a native of the Phillipines, lives in California. Adept at many styles of inking, Alfredo is probably best known to Marvel readers for his expert finishes over John Buscema on THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN. He is also a penciler and cover artist, and has created his own barbarian character, VOLTAR.

**MIKE W. BARR** lived a normal childhood in Akron, Ohio, until he discovered the mysterious liquid, **Royal Crown Cola,** that enables him to stretch his imagination to astonishing lengths. He now resides in New York City, where he solves strange mysteries and scripts an occasional comic book. He is also working on a detective novel.

**STEVE BISSETTE** says: "I be a born and bred Vermonter, come into the world in 1955 with a beaut of a bushy tail... Lived in Jersey long enough to attend the pioneer years of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art and get my feet wet in 'THE INDUSTRY.' " Steve's worked for many excellent publications, our own EPIC among them. "My personal life entails (oops!) fishing, various encounters, devouring entire books in a single sitting, eating non-poisonous food-stuffs..."

**JOHN BUSCEMA** was born and reared in Brooklyn, where he attended the High School of Music and Art and after that, Pratt Institute. He got his first job in comics in 1948 working on staff here at Marvel for Stan Lee. John has also done work for books, brochures, magazines, and advertising. "My favorite character in comics — the one I prefer drawing — is CONAN. I hope to go on drawing him forever!"

**CLYDE CALDWELL,** after receiving his Masters Degree in Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina, turned his hand to the field of Illustration. For the past three years Clyde has been primarily involved in doing cover paintings for books and magazines in the science fiction/fantasy field. He's recently finished a series of 10 paintings based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' "BARSOOM" novels.

**GENE COLAN** is, along with John Buscema, one of the most lyrical artists working in comic book and illustrative art today. Famed for his work on (among other titles) THE TOMB OF DRACULA, Gene currently pencils DOCTOR STRANGE and HOWARD THE DUCK as well as THE HULK — incredible! Denny O'Neil agreed to adapt his lovely short story, "ANNIE MAE" only on the condition that Gene pencil it. Mr. O'Neil has good taste in artists!

**LYNN GRAEME**'s twin ambitions as a six-year-old were to be a professional singer and a writer. After a childhood spent in Texas, several European countries, and Iceland, she moved to Long Island where she attended high school. A professional singer by the age of 13, she quit show business when she decided that a life spent on the road was not for her, and became a writer at the age of twenty-one. Having written for numerous newspapers and magazines since then, she has also written a travel book (with travel expert Marcia Powell) which will be issued by MacMillan this November.

**JOE JUSKO**'s art has graced the covers of, among other things, THE HULK and PREVIEW magazine several times. A native New Yorker, twenty-two-year-old Joe was inspired to draw comics "mainly by an awe of John Buscema's work." Joe worked as Howie Chaykin's assistant for six months, during which time he sold his first painting to HEAVY METAL magazine, and accepted his first assignment with MARVEL COMICS.

**FRANK MILLER** says about himself:

"Born in a small town in Vermont, FRANK MILLER led a normal childhood until that fateful night when, returning home from a Max Fleisher film festival, he saw his parents murdered before his eyes by a comic book editor.

"Editors are a superstitious, cowardly lot," he said, vowing to spend his life fighting them. 'I must become a creature of talent; feared, terrifying...'

"At that moment, a copy of **Two-Fisted Tales** glided into the room.

" 'That's it!' he cried, 'it's an omen! I shall become an artist!'

"Thus was born this weird figure of the drawing board, the nemesis of editors everywhere — FRANK MILLER, ARTIST!"

He draws good, too.

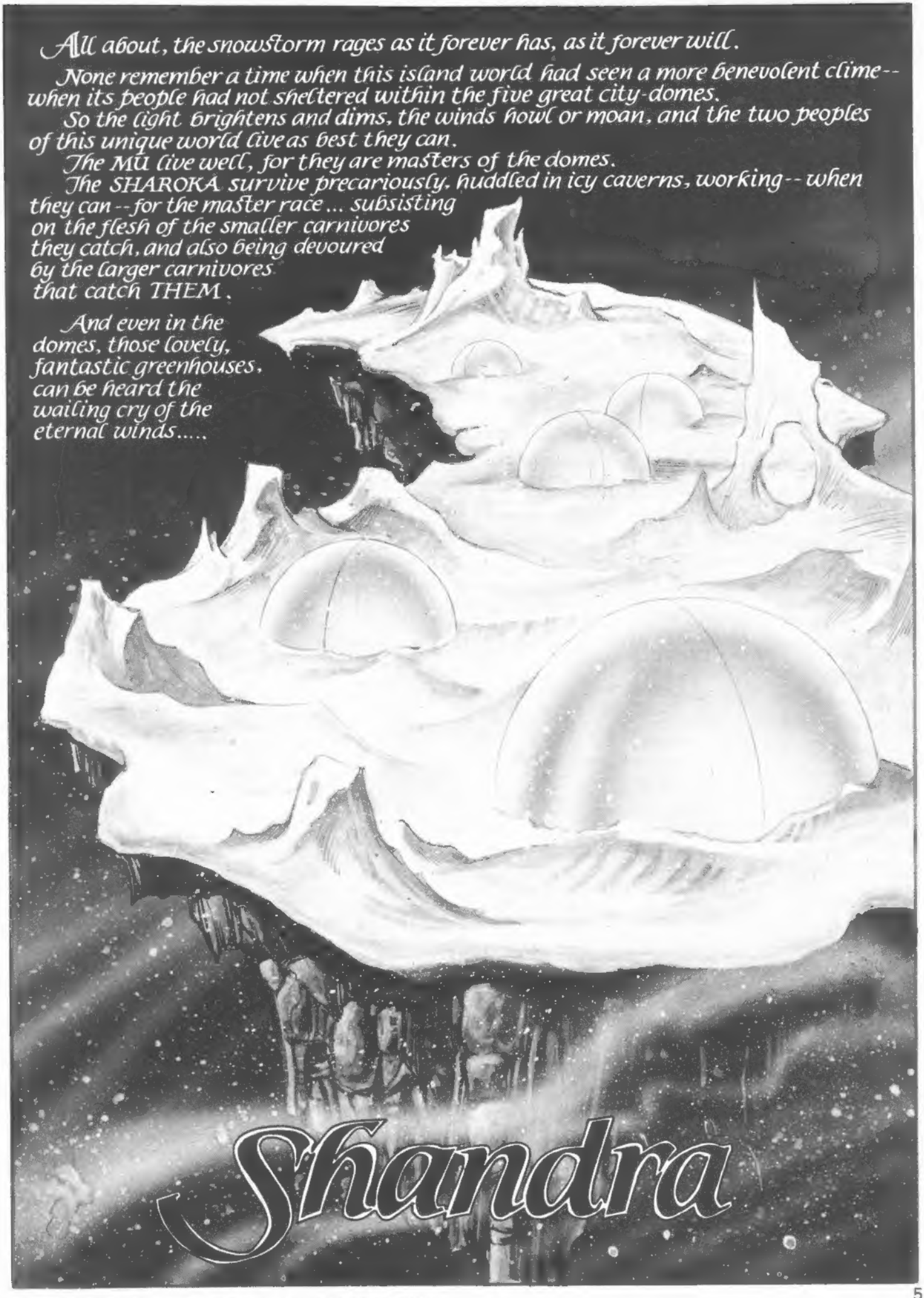
**DENNIS O'NEIL**'s work has appeared on radio and television, in books, magazines and in over 700 comics. He is currently a MARVEL editor, a haunter of Greenwich Village, a poker player and one who is trying to work out his salvation (he says) with diligence. Well-known as the writer for Our Distinguished Competitor, Mr. O'Neil has, among other writing chores, scripted the DOMINIC FORTUNE strip in THE HULK magazine, and is working on a book about the history of comic books for SCHOLASTIC publishers.

**STEVE SKEATES** has won four ACBA awards for humor writing. He lives in bucolic upstate Alfred, N.Y. where, among other things, he writes the HOWARD THE DUCK strip for CRAZY magazine.

**NED SONNTAG** was involved in underground comics in the early seventies, most notably with the character of SMACKY DUCK. He can be found at almost any given time skulking around the East Side of Manhattan in aviator glasses, fedora, long blond curls and a color-coordinating outfit starring his zoot suits.

**ROGER STERN** grew up in the heartlands of Indiana, where his main childhood friends were a petrified ear of corn and an old tire pump. He has made a *few* sentient friends since then. At an early age he discovered the printed word, which he devoured with great vigor... also, milk and sugar... sometimes with strawberries. Along the way he discovered comic books. His parents warned him that comics would be his ruination. They were right.

**JOHN TARTAGLIONE**'s original interest in art was in portraiture, which he worked at very seriously for some time — until financial necessity became the mother of a regular paying job! Since then, he's worked at Marvel, where he inks, tones, draws, and is a good influence on the unruly mob around him.


All about, the snowstorm rages as it forever has, as it forever will.
None remember a time when this island world had seen a more benevolent clime--when its people had not sheltered within the five great city-domes.
So the light brightens and dims, the winds howl or moan, and the two peoples of this unique world live as best they can.
The MU live well, for they are masters of the domes.
The SHAROKA survive precariously, huddled in icy caverns, working--when they can--for the master race... subsisting on the flesh of the smaller carnivores they catch, and also being devoured by the larger carnivores that catch THEM.
And even in the domes, those lovely, fantastic greenhouses, can be heard the wailing cry of the eternal winds.....
Shandra

Script: LYNN GRAEME Art: JOHN BUSCEMA & JOE JUSKO

ONCE THESE TWO PEOPLE, MU AND SHAROKA, HAD SHARED THE DOMES. THAT TIME IS PAST.
NOW THE SHAROKA ARE SERVANTS... AND SPORT!
REALLY, ROKA, YOUR AIM IS POOR TODAY!
WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR? I COULD HAVE HAD HIM HOURS AGO, BUT WHERE'S THE FUN IN THAT?
ROKA'S RIGHT! THE FUN IS IN THE CHASE!
THE FACT THAT THE CHASE IS NOT FUN FOR THEIR VICTIM -- THEY KNOW AND ENJOY. BUT THE HOUR GROWS LATE, AND THEIR PREY IS SLOWING FROM EXHAUSTION. SO--
HOPE HIS EARS ARE BIG. REMEMBER THAT CREATURE WE GOT LAST TIME? SMALLEST EARS I EVER SAW! MADE IT LOOK AS THOUGH I'D BAGGED A CUB!
DON'T WORRY. FROM THE SIZE OF THIS ONE, THE TROPHY'LL BE A CREDIT TO YOU.
HOW MANY'VE YOU BAGGED SO FAR?
SINCE I STARTED? COUNT THEM!
I KNOW A FELLOW IN DOME THREE WHO HAS A LINE OF THEM STRUNG ACROSS HIS DINING SPACE, LIKE A STREAMER!
BUT HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN AT IT?

WELL... QUITE A WHILE. HE'S PRETTY OLD. BEEN HUNTING SINCE THE EXPULSION.
GIVE ME THAT MUCH TIME AND I'LL HAVE MY WALLS PAPERED IN SHAROKA EARS-- IT'S THE ONLY THING THEY'RE GOOD FOR, ANYWAY.
NO ARGUMENT. LATELY THEY'VE EVEN BEEN LOUSY AS SERVANTS. FOURTHDAY I HAD TWO IN WHO--

AND THEY'RE STUPID!...
LOOK BEHIND YOU! IT'S A FEMALE!

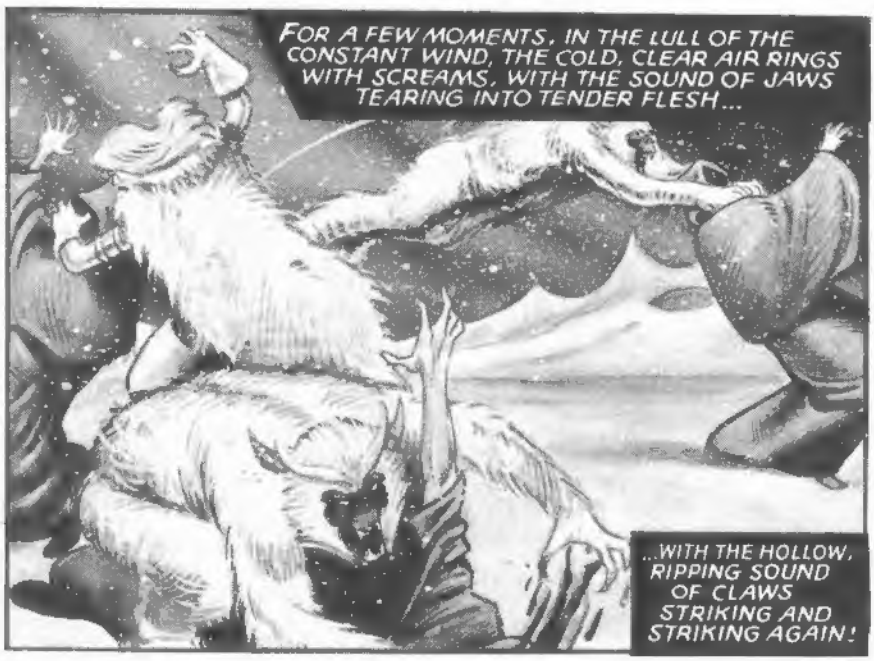
THAT SHOULD REMIND YOU OF ONE OTHER THING THE ANIMALS ARE GOOD FOR, eh, ROKA?

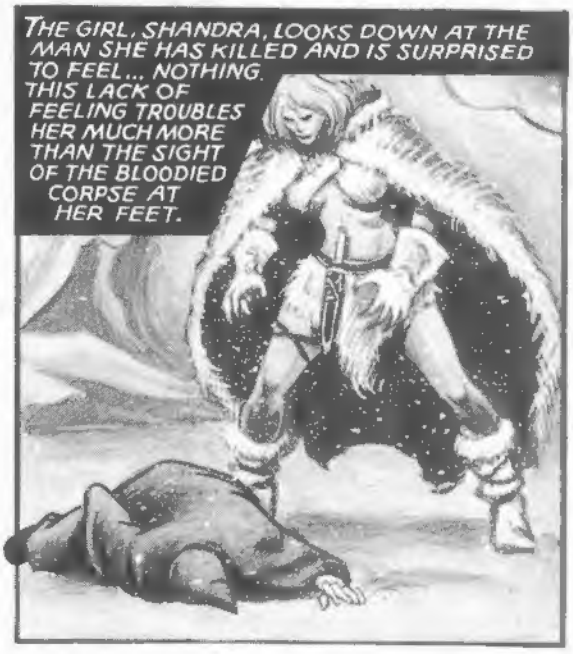
THE FACT THAT THIS GIRL SIMPLY STANDS AND STARES AT THEM, SEEMINGLY UNAFRAID, IS MORE STARTLING YET.
AND YET THE THREE MU DON'T ADVANCE FOR A MOMENT. TO HAVE ANY SHAROKA APPROACH THEM IN THE WILD WHERE, DESPITE OFFICIAL LAWS, THEY ARE FAIR GAME, IS STARTLING ENOUGH.

IT'S ONE OF THEM THAT'S GONE MAD... PROBABLY FROM BEING OUT HERE!
HER MADNESS WON'T SPOIL THE FUN WE CAN HAVE WITH HER...

HIS WORDS TRAIL OFF AS HIS THROAT CLOSES IN HORROR. FOR, RISING FROM THE SNOW WHERE THEY'D BEEN CONCEALED, ARE TWO KLAZ, THE MOST VICIOUS CARNIVORES KNOWN!
HAD THEY TIME FOR ANY-THING BUT TERROR, THESE THREE MU MIGHT WONDER WHY THE KLAZ DID NOT TURN ON THE GIRL FIRST...

... BUT THEY ARE ALREADY MOVING IN A DESPERATE, DOOMED ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE.


FOR A FEW MOMENTS, IN THE LULL OF THE CONSTANT WIND, THE COLD, CLEAR AIR RINGS WITH SCREAMS, WITH THE SOUND OF JAWS TEARING INTO TENDER FLESH...
...WITH THE HOLLOW, RIPPING SOUND OF CLAWS STRIKING AND STRIKING AGAIN!


THE GIRL, SHANDRA, LOOKS DOWN AT THE MAN SHE HAS KILLED AND IS SURPRISED TO FEEL... NOTHING. THIS LACK OF FEELING TROUBLES HER MUCH MORE THAN THE SIGHT OF THE BLOODIED CORPSE AT HER FEET.

HAS SHE BECOME AS SAVAGE AS THE KLAZ? FOR SO LONG SHE HAD LIVED OUT ON THE EDGE OF NOTHINGNESS WITH ONLY THESE BEASTS -- WITH WHOM SHE HAS A STRANGE TELEPATHIC BOND -- AND HER BROTHER SHON.

SHON HAD BEEN THE LAST AND ONLY HUMAN INFLUENCE ON HER, AND SINCE THE MU HAD TAKEN HIM, SHE HAD BEEN ALONE. NOW EVEN THOUGH SHE HATED THE MU AND THEIR HOTHOUSE DOMES, SHE WOULD GO BACK TO FREE HER BROTHER. THERE WAS ONE MU WHO MIGHT BE OF HELP: A MAN WHO HAD TAKEN TIME FOR A SMALL, FRIGHTENED GIRL ON THAT TERRIBLE DAY, SO LONG AGO--

THE EXPULSION
FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE COULD REMEMBER, AND SO LONG AS THE RECORDS TOLD, THE MU AND SHAROKA HAD CO-EXISTED WITHIN THE DOMES. LEGEND HAD IT THAT ONCE BOTH RACES HAD DWELT IN EQUALITY. LEGENDS CAN LIE. NO MATTER. A SUDDEN PRESSURE OF POPULATION HAD INSPIRED THE MU TO RID THEMSELVES OF THEIR COUSINS.
MERCILESSLY, MEN AND WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND EVEN THE SICK WERE DRIVEN FROM THE DOMES INTO THE ICY MAELSTROM.
A FEW MU PROTESTED, IN VAIN THAT MERCY NOT BE SHOWN TO...
MORAN, CHIEF BATTLER FOR SHAROKA RIGHTS, CAME TO THE BARRIER GATE OF HIS CITY DOME TO WATCH THE SAD PROCESSION.
MY BROTHER DOESN'T TAKE MUCH ROOM! YOU COULD HIDE HIM...!
I... I CAN'T. THEY WATCH ME NOW. THEY WOULD FIND HIM AND KILL HIM AFTER THE FINAL DEADLINE.
HERE -- TAKE THIS, AND REMEMBER, WE'RE NOT ALL MONSTERS.
SHANDRA HAD REMEMBERED. MORAN'S KINDNESS WAS ALL THAT HAD KEPT HER HATRED OF THE MU FROM TOTALLY CONSUMING HER.
FOR WHILE THE MU DWELT IN LUXURY WITHIN THE DOMES, MANY OF THE SHAROKA DIED. NOT SO MUCH FROM THE COLD -- FOR THEY WERE A TOUGH-SKINNED PEOPLE -- BUT FROM STARVATION AND DISEASE.
OF SHANDRA'S FAMILY, ONLY SHE AND HER BROTHER SHON SURVIVED. NOW THE MU HAD TAKEN SHON TO BE USED AS AN EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECT -- A LAB ANIMAL -- AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE EXPULSION, SHANDRA WOULD RETURN TO THE DOME THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HER HOME!

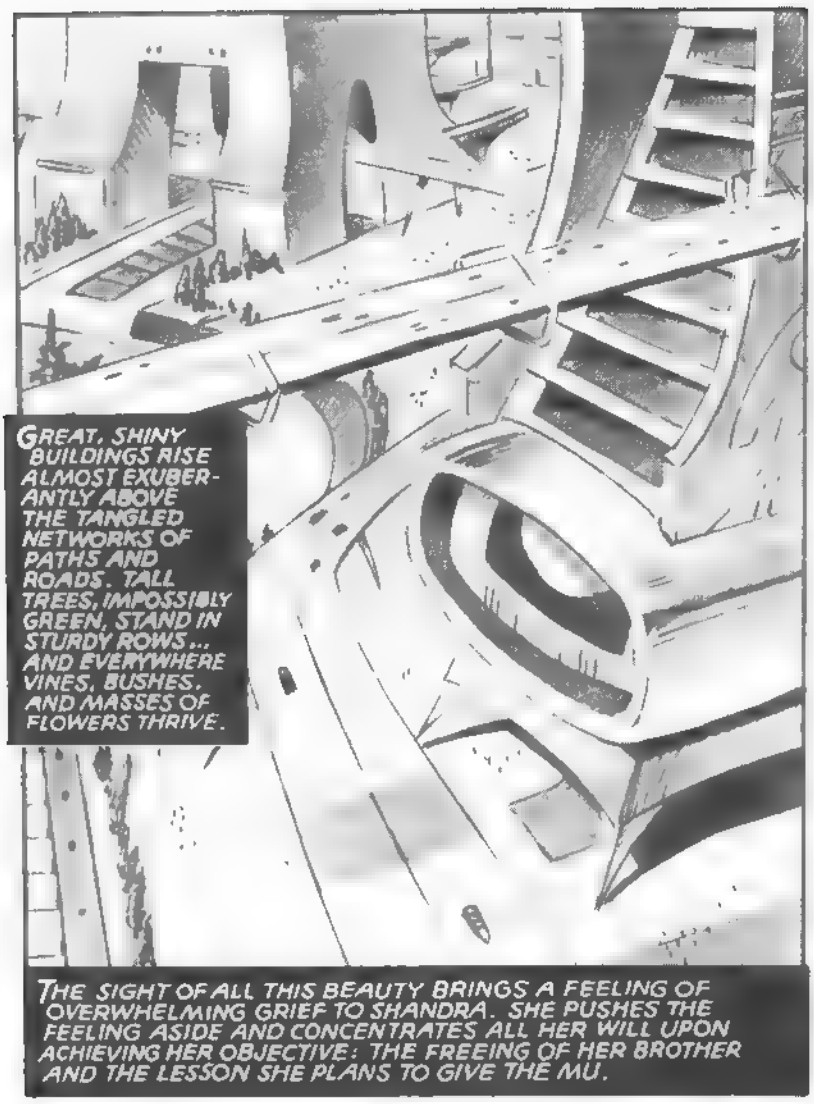
AFTER THE EXPULSION MOST SHAROKA REMAINED CLOSE TO THE DOMES. THEIR REASON, AMONG THEMSELVES, WAS THAT THIS WAY THEY COULD GET A DAY'S WORK NOW AND AGAIN, AND EARN THE CLOTH AND VEGETABLES THEY COULDN'T GET OTHERWISE. BUT, IN THEIR HEARTS, THEY EACH HELD THE HOPE THAT SOMEDAY THE DOMES WOULD ONCE AGAIN BELONG TO THEM, TOO.

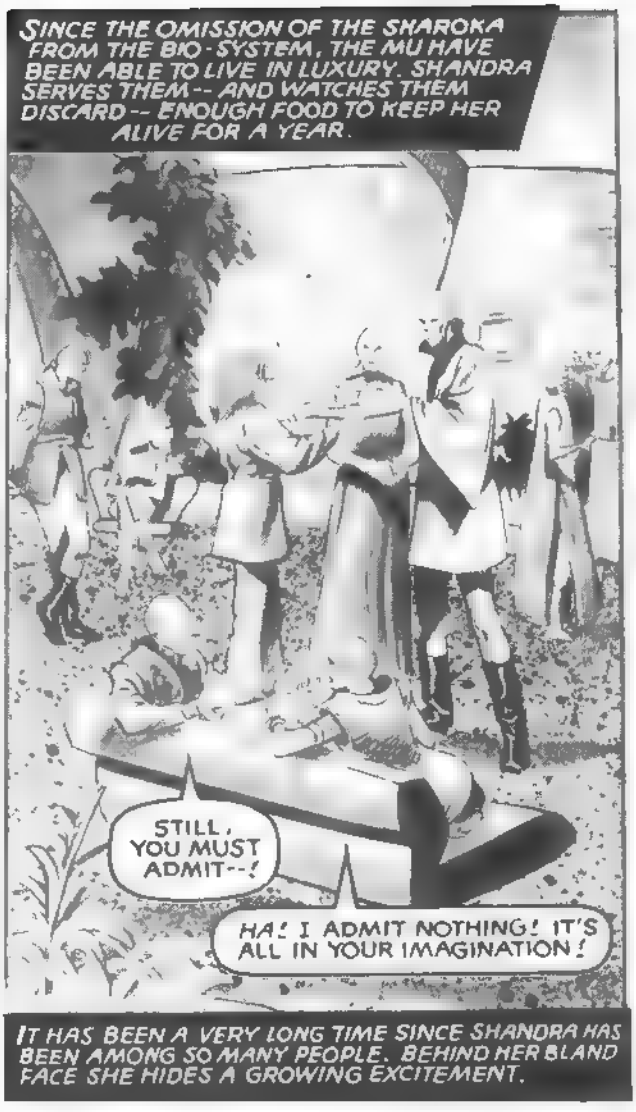
AND SO THEY WAIT OUTSIDE THE DOME, GLIMPSING THROUGH THE FROSTED BARRIER A VISION OF HEAVEN, SUCCULENT AND GREEN.

SO INTENT ARE THEY THAT AT FIRST THEY DON'T NOTICE SHANDRA'S APPROACH. THEN ONE SEES HER, AND THEN ANOTHER. FROM THE FIRST HER FAMILY HAD SEPARATED THEMSELVES FROM THE OTHER SHAROKA, GOING OFF ALONE TO LIVE AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD IN THE ICE-CAVES FREQUENTED BY THE KLAZ.

IT IS RUMORED THAT THE HOWLING OF THE ETERNAL WIND HAS DRIVEN HER MAD, OR GIVEN HER STRANGE POWERS... OR BOTH.
ALMOST AS ONE, THE WAITING SHAROKA TURN AND FLEE FROM HER.

IT'S A STARTLED AND DISGRUNTLED BARRIER GUARD WHO FINDS--
ONLY ONE OF YOU VERMIN THIS TIME? WHAT IS IT, ONE OF YOUR WEIRD RELIGIOUS DAYS?
JUST AS EASILY AS THIS SHANDRA ENTERS THE CITADEL OF HER ENEMIES.


GREAT, SHINY BUILDINGS RISE ALMOST EXUBERANTLY ABOVE THE TANGLED NETWORKS OF PATHS AND ROADS. TALL TREES, IMPOSSIBLY GREEN, STAND IN STURDY ROWS... AND EVERYWHERE VINES, BUSHES, AND MASSES OF FLOWERS THRIVE.
THE SIGHT OF ALL THIS BEAUTY BRINGS A FEELING OF OVERWHELMING GRIEF TO SHANDRA. SHE PUSHES THE FEELING ASIDE AND CONCENTRATES ALL HER WILL UPON ACHIEVING HER OBJECTIVE: THE FREEING OF HER BROTHER AND THE LESSON SHE PLANS TO GIVE THE MU.


SINCE THE OMISSION OF THE SHAROKA FROM THE BIO-SYSTEM, THE MU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LIVE IN LUXURY. SHANDRA SERVES THEM -- AND WATCHES THEM DISCARD -- ENOUGH FOOD TO KEEP HER ALIVE FOR A YEAR.
STILL, YOU MUST ADMIT--!
HA! I ADMIT NOTHING! IT'S ALL IN YOUR IMAGINATION!
IT HAS BEEN A VERY LONG TIME SINCE SHANDRA HAS BEEN AMONG SO MANY PEOPLE. BEHIND HER BLAND FACE SHE HIDES A GROWING EXCITEMENT.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN, ALONE, SHE GRASPS THE AMULET AND FIXES ALL HER SPIRIT ON THE MEMORY OF ONE BEING: MORAN.

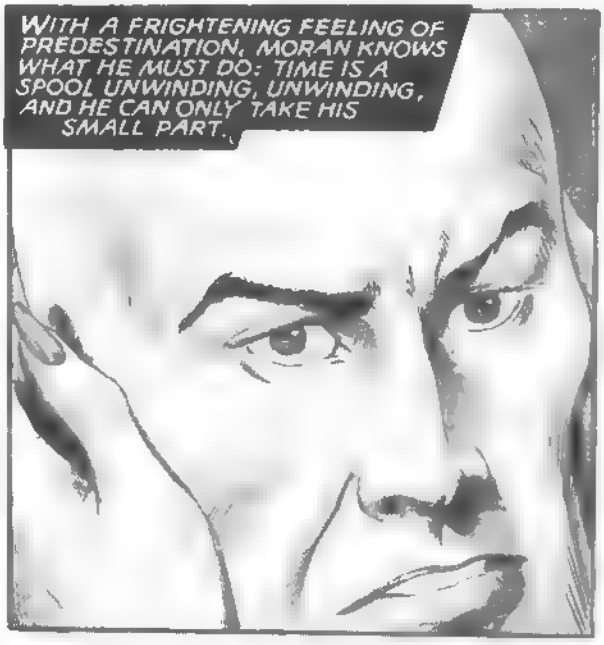
AS THOUGH DRAWN BY A SILVER THREAD, SHANDRA COLLECTS HER BELONGINGS AND FOLLOWS THE FAINT PULSE OF THE ONE SHE SEEKS.
THERE IS NONE TO SEE HER GO; BY THE TIME THEY MISS HER IT WILL BE TOO LATE.

MORAN, THE FAILED HUMANIST, AT THE OTHER END OF THIS SILVER THREAD OF BEING, BROODS. HIS THOUGHTS TURN INEXPLICABLY BACK TO THAT TRAGIC DAY, THE EXPULSION, AND ONE SMALL, VULNERABLE FACE BECOMES FIXED IN HIS MIND...
HE HEARS NO SOUND, BUT THE FEELING OF HER PRESENCE CAUSES HIM TO TURN, HIS MIND STOPPING IN WONDER.

SHE IS ALL SILVER AND GREY, EXCEPT FOR THE PALE PINK OF HER SKIN. YEARS ARE AS NOTHING AS HE BEHOLDS THE CHILD WHO IS NOW A WOMAN, AND YET FOREVER THAT CHILD.
WHO ARE YOU?!

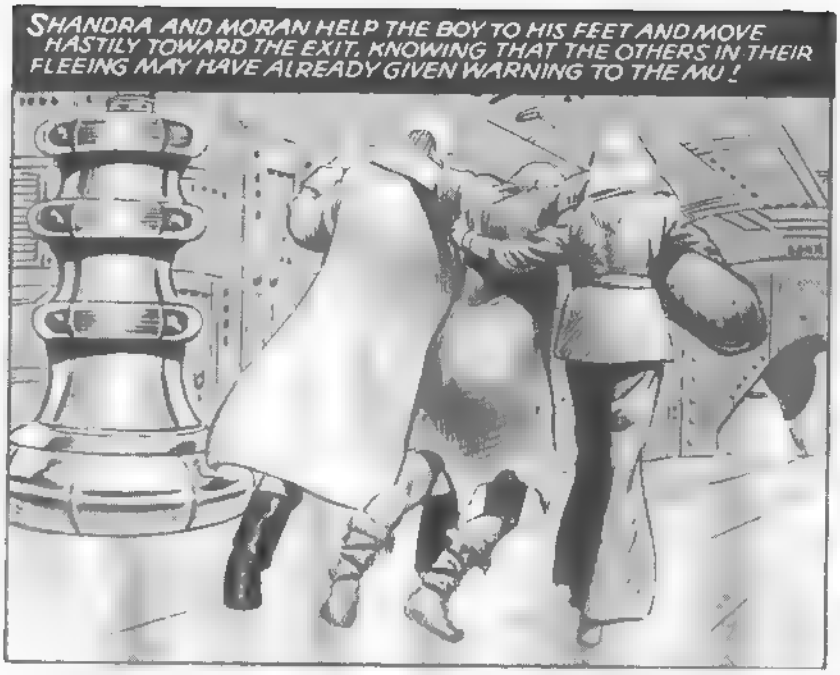
WITHOUT ANSWERING, SHANDRA HOLDS OUT THE AMULET.
YES... EVEN ON THAT DAY SO LONG AGO, I KNEW I'D SEE YOU AGAIN!

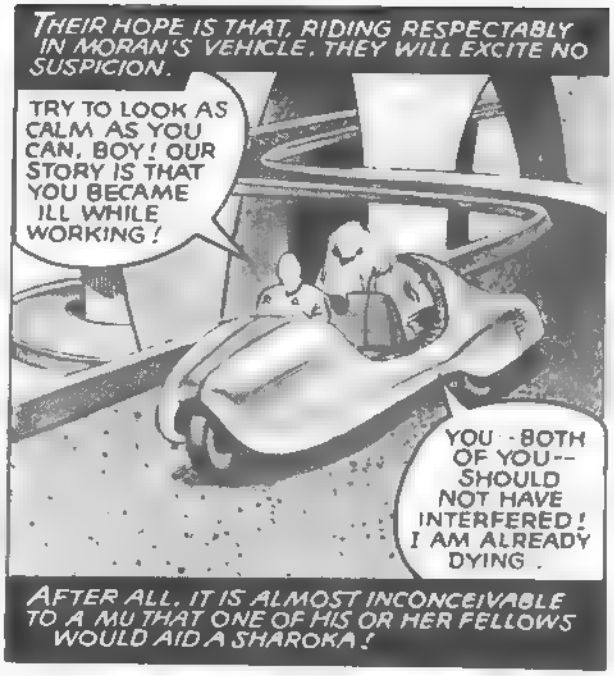
WORDLESSLY, SHANDRA PLACES HER COOL, SMOOTH PALMS AGAINST MORAN'S HEAD, AND WITHOUT WORDS, THE VISIONS FLOW INTO HIS MIND.


WITH A FRIGHTENING FEELING OF PREDESTINATION, MORAN KNOWS WHAT HE MUST DO: TIME IS A SPOOL UNWINDING, UNWINDING, AND HE CAN ONLY TAKE HIS SMALL PART.

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE DOME, OTHERS ALSO FULFILL THEIR FATES...
I WON'T TAKE ANY MORE OF THIS, DO YOU HEAR, PIG? I'LL THROW MYSELF INTO THESE BARS UNTIL I'M BURNT TO A CRISP-- AT LEAST THEN I WON'T BE OF ANY USE TO YOU!
BE STUPID, IF YOU LIKE. YOU'LL PASS OUT, WE'LL BRING YOU AROUND, AND START YOU AGAIN. YOU CAN'T WIN.
HAVE YOU NOTICED, FRIENDS, THAT THE MU SPEAK THE TRUTH ONLY WHEN IT'S CRUEL?

THE MU ENJOYS THIS JOKE, BUT MUST INTERRUPT HIS AMUSEMENT TO GRANT ADMISSION TO MORAN AND HIS SHAROKA COMPANION.
WHAT'S THIS? A NEW LAB ANIMAL, AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
SHE'S OFFENDED ME BEFORE MY FRIENDS! I WISH TO MAKE HER AN EXAMPLE!
AN AWARENESS OF POLITICS MIGHT HAVE SPARED HIS LIFE, FOR HE WOULD HAVE IDENTIFIED MORAN AS A DISSIDENT LEADER.
BUT...!
SECONDS LATER...
POOR CREATURES, WE SHOULD SAVE THEM ALL!
BUT MORAN KNOWS THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE--
--KNOWS HE IS SETTING THEM ALL--EXCEPT ONE--FREE ONLY TO RUN HELPLESSLY UNTIL THEY ARE CAUGHT.
EASY, BOY...!
SISTER...


SHANDRA AND MORAN HELP THE BOY TO HIS FEET AND MOVE HASTILY TOWARD THE EXIT, KNOWING THAT THE OTHERS IN THEIR FLEEING MAY HAVE ALREADY GIVEN WARNING TO THE MU!


THEIR HOPE IS THAT, RIDING RESPECTABLY IN MORAN'S VEHICLE, THEY WILL EXCITE NO SUSPICION.
TRY TO LOOK AS CALM AS YOU CAN, BOY! OUR STORY IS THAT YOU BECAME ILL WHILE WORKING!
YOU - BOTH OF YOU-- SHOULD NOT HAVE INTERFERED! I AM ALREADY DYING.
AFTER ALL, IT IS ALMOST INCONCEIVABLE TO A MU THAT ONE OF HIS OR HER FELLOWS WOULD AID A SHAROKA!

YOU KNOW YOUR SISTER COULD NOT DO OTHERWISE...
YES, BUT YOU COULD HAVE. I THANK YOU...

HALT, THERE, WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? THE WORK PERIOD ISN'T OVER YET!
I... I BECAME ILL. MY SISTER IS TAKING ME HOME.

LYING, LAZY, SHAMBLING SHAROKA!

IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE WHEN HE HEARS...
...TWO SHAROKA, A MALE AND A FEMALE, BOTH SILVER-HAIRED, PERHAPS ACCOMPANIED BY A MU.....

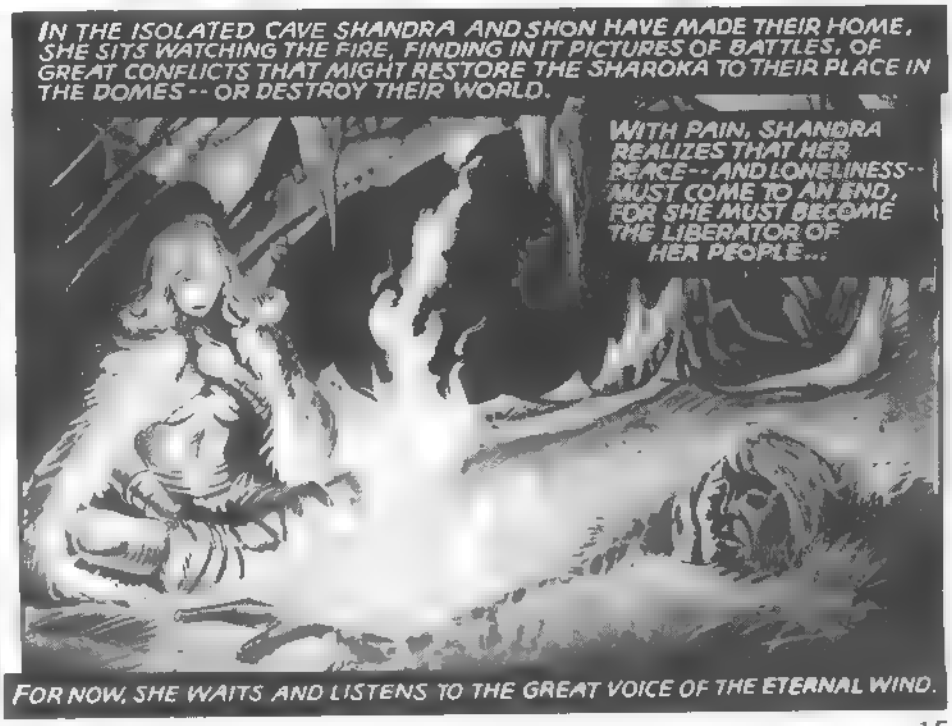
BY THE TIME SHANDRA AND SHON HAVE REACHED THE OUTER BARRIER--
STOP THERE, SHAROKA!

IT IS AS I FEARED! YOU'VE ONLY DOOMED YOURSELF, AND FOR NOTHING!

THEN, OUT OF THE POWDERY SILVER SNOW RISE THE KLAZ, THEIR TERRIFYING, RASPING HOWLS SHATTER THE CRYSTAL-COLD AIR!

AARGH!
FOR THE SECOND TIME THAT DAY, BRIGHT MU BLOOD STAINS THE SNOW...

SHANDRA DRAWS HER HORRIFIED BROTHER AWAY FROM THE SCENE OF SLAUGHTER.


IN THE ISOLATED CAVE SHANDRA AND SHON HAVE MADE THEIR HOME, SHE SITS WATCHING THE FIRE, FINDING IN IT PICTURES OF BATTLES, OF GREAT CONFLICTS THAT MIGHT RESTORE THE SHAROKA TO THEIR PLACE IN THE DOMES -- OR DESTROY THEIR WORLD.
WITH PAIN, SHANDRA REALIZES THAT HER PEACE -- AND LONELINESS -- MUST COME TO AN END, FOR SHE MUST BECOME THE LIBERATOR OF HER PEOPLE...
FOR NOW, SHE WAITS AND LISTENS TO THE GREAT VOICE OF THE ETERNAL WIND.

Annie Mae:
A Love Story
Original story copyright © 1972 by Dennis O'Neil
Adaptation copyright 1980 by Marvel Comics
ALL DAY THEY HAVE TRUDGED THE NOVEMBER PAVEMENTS OF NEW YORK NOW, NEARLY EXHAUSTED, THEY STAND BEFORE A BOWERY HOTEL.
BUT DANNY I DON'T WANT TO GET A ROOM IN A FLEABAG LIKE A— A TRAMP.
WE'VE GOT TO BABY! THAT OR SPEND THE NIGHT ON THE STREET! FACE IT... WE'VE GOT ELEVEN BUCKS BETWEEN US! WE'RE NOT GONNA STAY AT THE PLAZA!
C'MON... LET'S AT LEAST GO INSIDE
DENNIS
A: GENE COLAN & ALFREDO ALCALA

HERE YA ARE--THE HONEYMOON SUITE! HOW LONG YA BE STAYIN?
A- NIGHT
THE WHOLE NIGHT, HUH? WELL, WHY NOT? I WAS YOUNG ONCE MYSELF. HAVE FUN!
NOT SO BAD S -?
AND ME DO YOU HATE ME?
JEEZ, BABY I WISH I COULD MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER. DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU A STORY? I'M GOOD AT STORY-TELLING, REMEMBER?
YES, YOU ARE
YES IT'S. I HATE IT. . AND I HATE NEW YORK AND THE THINGS WE'VE DONE AND--
OKAY TELL ME A STORY 'A LOVE STORY'
HOW TO BEGIN

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A MAN... A CRO-MAGNON MAN WHO WAS STUNNED AND UNHAPPY. DESPISED BY THE TRIBE.
BECAUSE HE WAS AN UNCOMMONLY FINE HUNTER, THOUGH, HE MANAGED TO EAT.
HE WAS HUNGRY-- HE KNEW NOT FOR WHAT. CERTAINLY NOT MEAT--HE HAD PLENTY, BUT FOR SOMETHING.
ONE MORNING, EARLIER THAN USUAL, HE STEPPED INTO THE SUNLIGHT AND SURVEYED THE FAMILIAR SCENE... HIS VALLEY, HIS WORLD, LUSH AND FULL OF STIRRINGS.

He heard the faint scraping behind and above him and whirled, muscles tensed, ready to fight...
It -- she -- was standing on a ledge at the top of the cave entrance. He immediately recognized her as female, but female utterly unlike any he had ever seen.

He wanted her... and with the wanting came an itch in his skull, an awareness -- a consciousness. The consciousness flicked and danced, spreading from head to fingertips to feet...

He scrambled toward her and she skipped higher --

-- higher still, she reached the top of the cliff and stood limned in the sun...

THE SUN'S GLARE BRIGHTENED, SEEMED TO ENFOLD HER... BLINDED HIM...
WHEN HE COULD AGAIN SEE, SHE WAS GONE.
GONE, TOO, WAS THE CONSCIOUSNESS. HE WAS NUMB AND STUPID AND EMPTY AND WOULD BE FOR CENTURIES.
NUMB AND EMPTY AND STUPID, HE WAS, EXCEPT FOR A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS IN EACH OF HIS INCARNATIONS. IT WOULD BE BORING, A REPETITOUS, TO CATALOGUE THEM ALL.
NEARLY FORTY THOUSAND YEARS LATER, HE WAS RE-BORN AS A SCOTTISH PEASANT. HE WAS TENDING HIS MASTER'S FENCE AT THE BOUNDARY MARKING ESTATE GROUNDS FROM THE MOOR--
--AND SHE APPEARED TOES SUNK INTO THE MARSHY SOIL, HAIR CHANGING FROM RED TO WHITE.
INSTANTLY, HE REMEMBERED, WANTED...
HE CHASED HER ONTO THE MOOR, INTO THE MISTS...

THE MISTS ENFOLDED HER, AND SHE WAS GONE...

A HUNDRED YEARS LATER, HE WAS A FISHERMAN IN FRANCE WHEN SHE APPEARED...

HE REMEMBERED AND, REMEMBERING, ACHED FOR HER--

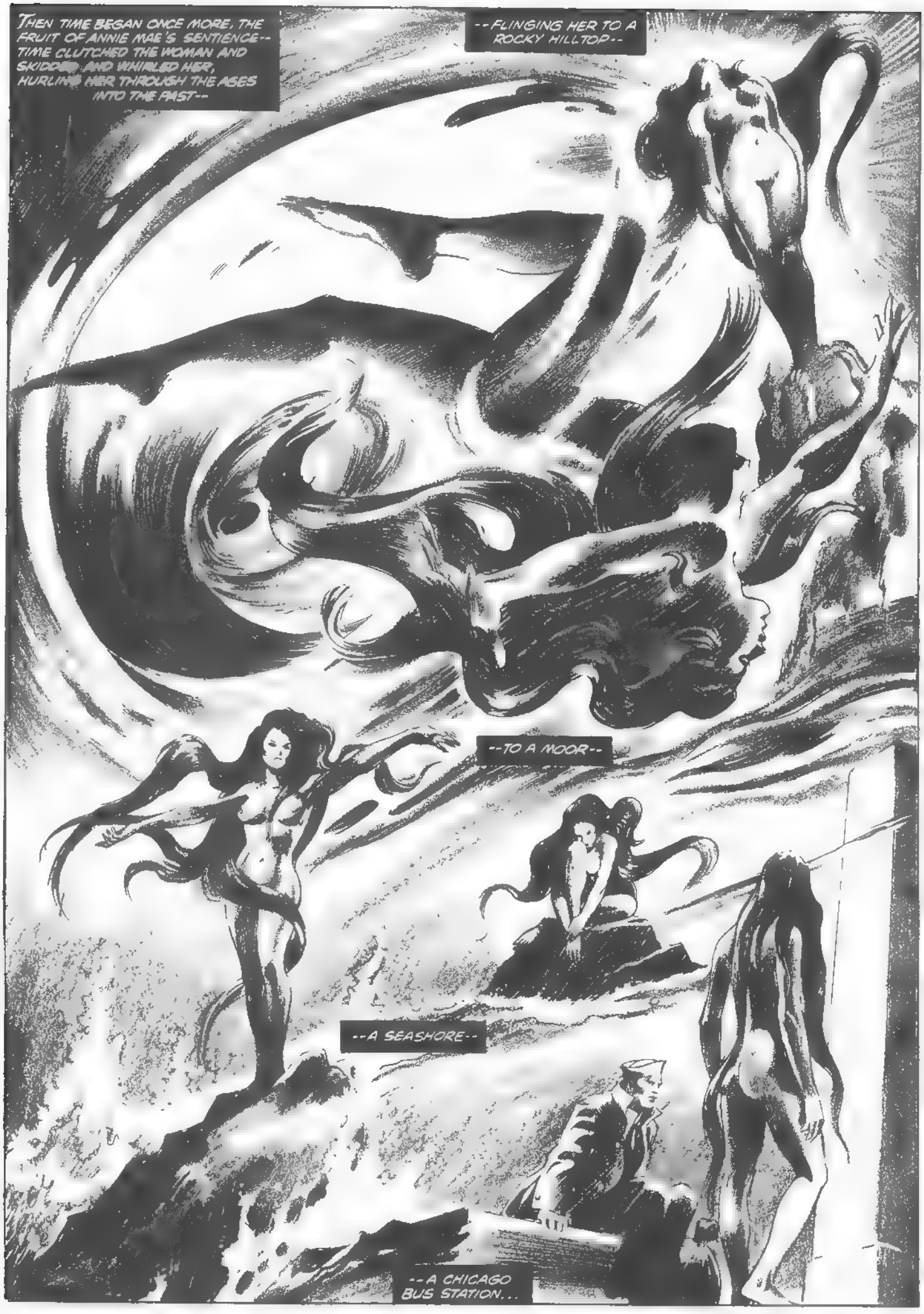
--BUT SHE FADED INTO THE TWILIGHT BEFORE HE COULD SCREAM OUT HIS LONGING...

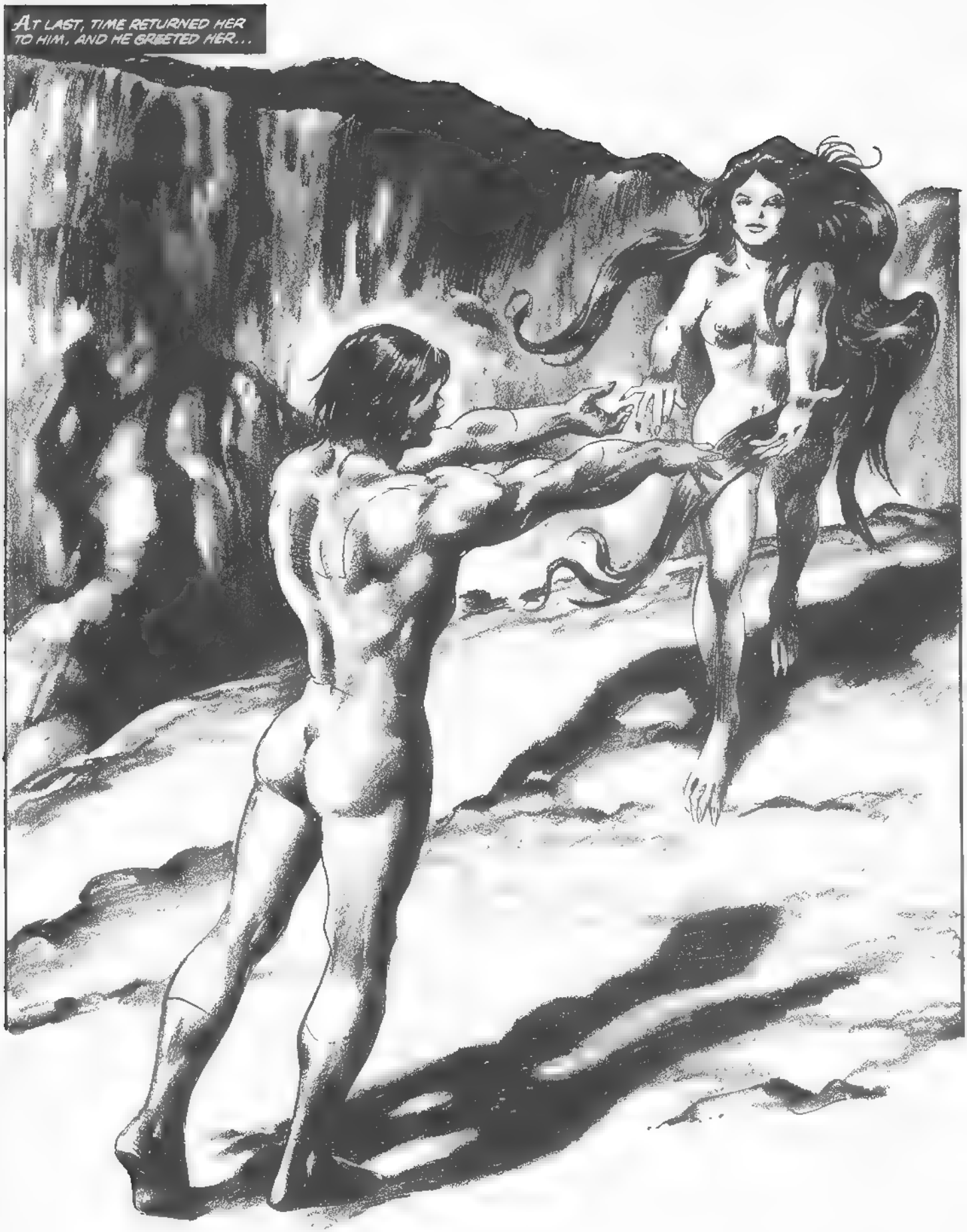
NEXT, HE WAS INCARNATED AS A SAILOR. IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVE AND HE WAS IN A BUS TERMINAL HEARING, BUT NOT LISTENING TO, A TINNY CAROL BLARING FROM A JUKEBOX...
♫ God rest ye merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay ♫
USN
HELL WITH THAT! I AM DISMAYED. SOME HOLIDAY...WAITING FOR A BUS TO TAKE ME TO DUTY ON THE CRUMMIEST SUB-CHASER IN THE FLEET!
A LITTLE ASTRAY-GOING WOULD BE OKAY BY ME. I COULD ENJOY GOING ASTRAY!
HUH? FEET?
LOOK, SISTER, WHATEVER YOU'RE SELLING, I AIN'T BUYING! I AIN'T IN ANY MOOD FOR GAMES...

HE REMEMBERED, THEN, AND WANTED.
HEY, WAIT!
COME BACK!
I GOTTA TALK TO YOU!
PLEASE!
NO... NO!
NOT AGAIN!

IN THE FINAL INSTANTS BEFORE HIS TRUE CONSCIOUSNESS DWINDLED AND SLEPT, HE RAGED, HE CRIED--
DAMN YOU! I'VE BEEN CHASING YOU FOR A THOUSAND LIFETIMES AND I'M SICK OF IT! EITHER GET IN MY LIFE OR GET THE HELL OUT OF IT!
I'M DONE WITH YOU.
HE WASN'T.
IN THE CENTURIES THAT FOLLOWED, MANKIND MIRACULOUSLY ATTAINED WISDOM. THEY ABANDONED FIRE-BELCHING MACHINES AND SOUGHT THE STARS ON WINGS OF SHIMMERING ENERGY DRAWN FROM THE THE SOURCES OF CREATION ITSELF.
THESE FRAIL HUMANS WENT WRAPPED IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY BELONGED, AND THIS KNOWLEDGE PROTECTED THEM FROM COLD AND HEAT AND VACUUM.
MEN TRAVELED EVERYWHERE, AND LEARNED MUCH, AND LOVED ALL THEY LEARNED.
TO NOTHINGNESS, HAPPY THAT IT HAD BEEN, CONTENT THAT IT WAS NO LONGER.

BEFORE CEASING TO BE, HOWEVER, THE RACE DECREED THAT ONE OF ITS NUMBER REMAIN, TO STAND AS A MARKER. HE, THE CHOSEN, HAD BEEN CAVEMAN, FARMER, FISHERMAN, SAILOR--OH, MANY THINGS--AND NOW HE WAS THE MONUMENT OF HIS KIND.
HE EXISTED. TIME, WITH NO ONE TO NOTE ITS PASSAGE, GAVE WAY TO ETERNITY AND STILL HE EXISTED, DOZING IN FOREVER.
HE AWOKE.
AND HE WAS LONELY.
AND HE REALIZED THERE WAS NO NEED FOR LONELINESS. SO HE WENT TO A
--FORMED, SHAPED, SCULPTED THEM INTO A REMEMBERED BEAUTY, AND GAVE THE BEAUTY AWARENESS AND WOMANHOOD, AND CALLED THE WOMAN ANNIE MAE.


THEN TIME BEGAN ONCE MORE, THE FRUIT OF ANNIE MAE'S SENTIENCE-- TIME CLUTCHED THE WOMAN AND SKIDDED AND WHIRLED HER, HURLING HER THROUGH THE AGES INTO THE PAST--
--FLINGING HER TO A ROCKY HILLTOP--
--TO A MOOR--
--A SEASHORE--
--A CHICAGO BUS STATION...

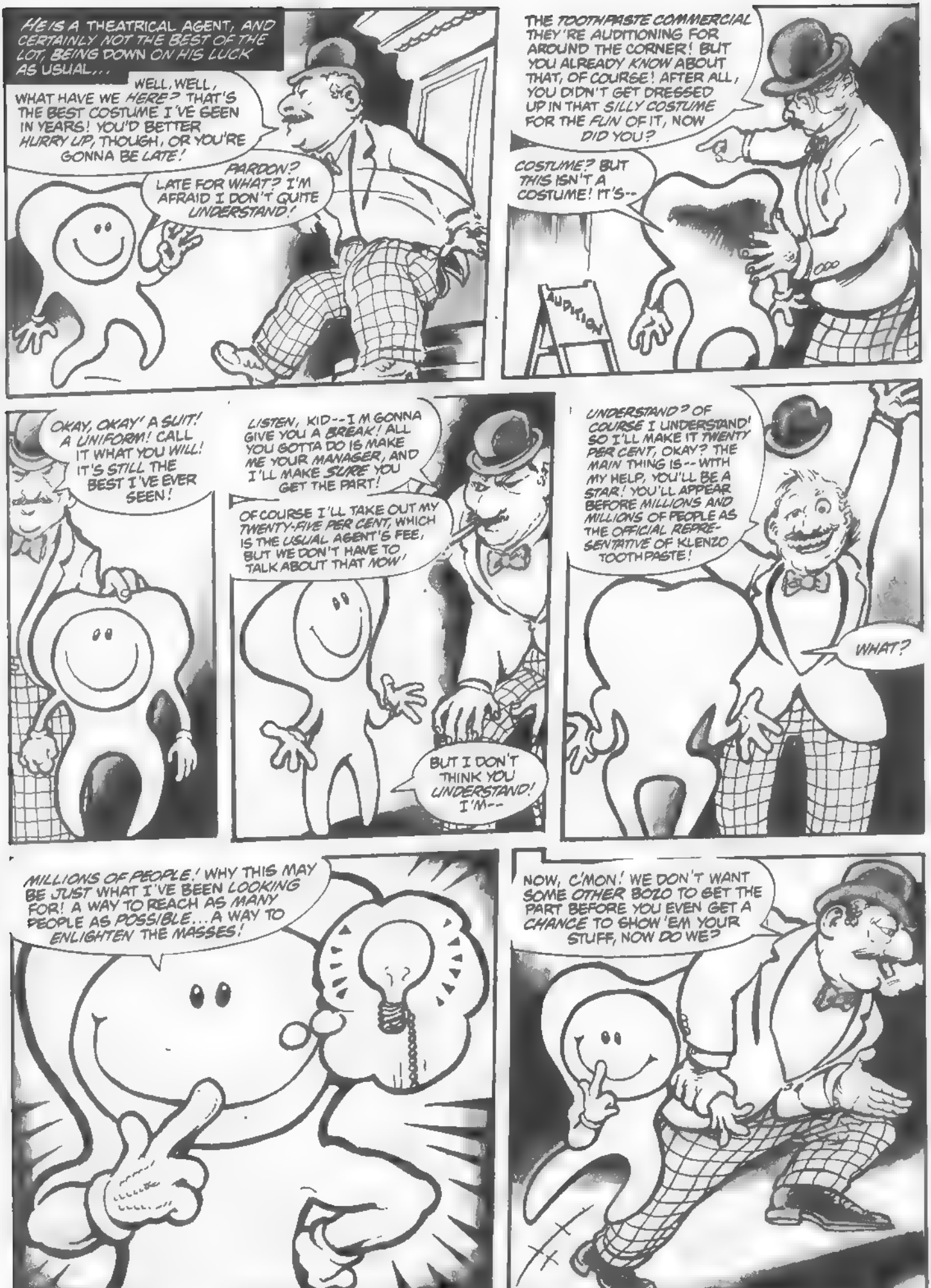

At last, time returned her to him, and he greeted her...
There, at the beginning and end of all that was, they touched..

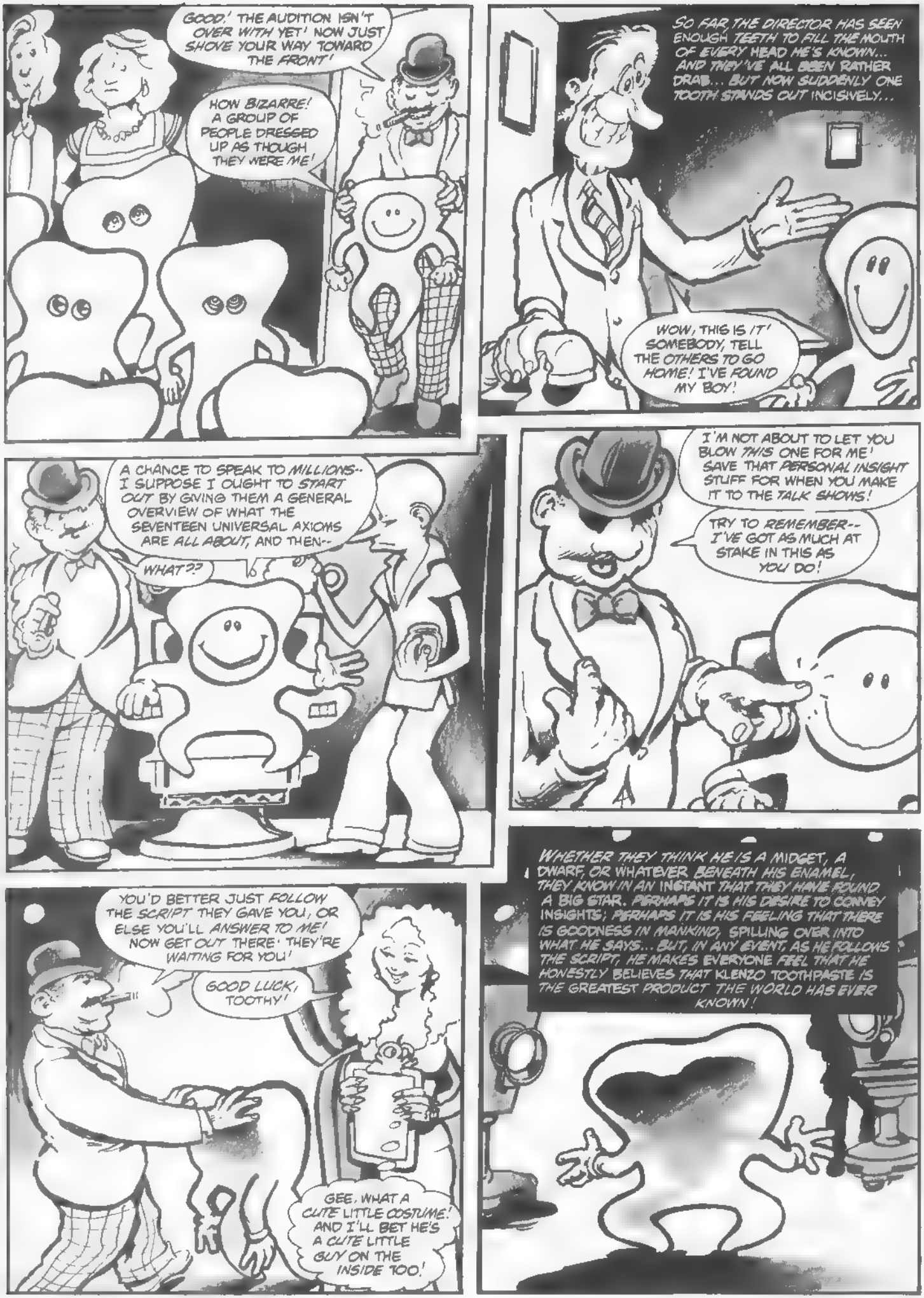
THAT'S MY STORY HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?
I'M JEALOUS
WHY?
THE WOMAN YOU DESCRIBED, ANNIE MAE SHE SOUNDED LIKE A PLAYBOY CENTERFOLD OR SOMETHING. SHE DIDN'T SOUND LIKE ME.
IT WAS JUST A STORY.
YOU BELIEVE IT OR YOU WANT TO
DANNY, ARE WE AT THE BEGINNING OR THE END?
I DON'T KNOW ANGEL I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW
BUT HE DOES--AND

THEY WERE WELL-NAMED, THESE DARK AGES. MANKIND WAS IN DIRE NEED OF A LITTLE LIGHT, A LITTLE INSIGHTFUL KNOWLEDGE--KNOWLEDGE WHICH MANY A COURT MAGICIAN TRIED TO OBTAIN THROUGH MYSTICAL MEANS, BY CHANTING CACOPHONOUS INCANTATIONS AND INSCRIBING WEIRD SYMBOLS UPON SO-CALLED SACRED PARCHMENT. THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE SUCH MAGICIAN...
STORY BY STEVE SKEATES
ART BY NED SONNTAG
the Whole Tooth
...ONE WHO SUCCEEDED...
...ONE WHO, UPON SAYING ALL THE RIGHT WORDS AND SCRIBBLING ALL THE PROPER PICTURES, WAS WHISKED OUT FROM HIS TOWERING, COLD STONE ABODE...
...AND DEPOSITED UPON THE EVEN COLDER TERRAIN OF A DIMENSION FAR REMOVED FROM OUR OWN...
SO' AT LAST SOMEONE OPENED THE PORTAL AND PASSED THROUGH, SEEKING COSMIC AWARENESS--TOO VAST FOR SUCH A PUNY HEAD AS YOURS TO HOLD'
BUT, NONETHELESS, I SHALL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU SEEK'
GROW, THEN' GROW BOTH IN BODY AND MIND'
YE GODS! SUDDENLY I AM AWARE OF SO MUCH! THE TRUTH IS SPREAD OUT BEFORE ME LIKE AN OPENED BOOK! AND NOW THAT I CAN SEE IT, IT ALL SEEMS SO SIMPLE!
I MUST RETURN TO MY WORLD IMMEDIATELY, SO THAT I MAY ENLIGHTEN OTHERS--SHARE MY NEW-FOUND KNOWLEDGE WITH THE WORLD

BUT, AS THE NOW HUGE AND POWERFUL MYSTIC RE-ENTERS OUR PLANE OF EXISTENCE...
'SBLOOD ALIVE! THOUGH ONLY A FEW MINUTES SEEMED TO PASS IN THAT OTHER DIMENSION, I AM SUDDENLY QUITE COSMETICALLY AWARE THAT MANY, MANY CENTURIES HAVE COME AND GONE HERE IN THIS PORTION OF THE COSMOS!
EAGERLY, THE MAGICIAN DESCENDS TOWARD OUR WORLD AND ENTERS OUR ATMOSPHERE, ONLY THEN TO BECOME QUITE PAINFULLY AWARE OF...
FRICTION! MY CENTURY KNEW NOTHING OF THE LAWS OF PHYSICS!
YET NOW MY BODY IS ACTUALLY BURNING UP DUE TO MERE CONTACT WITH THE AIR ITSELF! AND NOW THAT GRAVITY HAS TRULY TAKEN HOLD, I CANNOT HALT MY DESCENT!
BUT THANKS TO MY AWESOME AWARENESS, I NOW KNOW HOW TO EASILY WITHSTAND THE PAIN!
AND MORE: I CAN ALSO MYSTICALLY TRANSFER MY INTELLIGENCE, THE VERY ESSENCE OF MY BEING, TO WHATEVER PORTION OF MY GIANT BODY HAS NOT YET BEEN CONSUMED BY FLAMES!
AND, AS FINALLY HE LANDS, RESOUNDINGLY IN A BACK ALLEY OF THE INNER-CITY, ALL THAT REMAINS OF THIS ONCE AND FOREVER WISE WIZARD IS A TOOTH...
NOVELTY CORP.
ACME
WHAT SORROW! IS THIS WHAT THE WORLD HAS BECOME? I WISHED TO MAGICALLY GIVE THIS QUAINT PORCELAIN BODY I MUST NOW BE CONTENT WITH A FACE... SO THAT I COULD BETTER FIT IN WITH THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD...
...BUT I DO NOT WISH A FACE AS SAD AS THESE!
ACME
WAIT! THIS BOX IS DISCS I FELL UPON--THESE MUST SYMBOLIZE THE HOPES OF THIS WORLD! EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM HAS A HAPPY SMILING FACE UPON IT! THIS IS THE KIND OF FACE I WANT!

AND SO, A HAPPY HERO ,S BORN...
THESE ROOTS SHOULD FUNCTION WELL ENOUGH AS LEGS, BUT WHAT I REALLY NEED IS SOMETHING TO GRASP OBJECTS AND MAKE GESTURES WITH!
IF HIS FACE WERE MORE THAN JUST A SILLY DESIGN SLAPPED UPON HIS UPPER FRONT, YOU WOULD SEE NOW THE FURROWS AND THE FROWN BORN OF CONCENTRATION... BUT, REST ASSURED, HE DOES CONCENTRATE... MIGHTILY... UNTIL, FINALLY...
THERE WE ARE! THIS BODY MAY NOT SEEM COMPLETE BY MANY PEOPLE'S STANDARDS...
BUT, FOR ME, AT THE MOMENT AT LEAST, IT SHALL CERTAINLY SERVE!
NOW, TO EXPLORE THIS NEW WORLD-- THAT SHOULD BE MY FIRST OBJECTIVE! AND LEARN OF THE MANY WONDERS THIS ADVANCED CIVILIZATION HAS TO OFFER!
BUT WONDERS ARE NOT EXACTLY WHAT HE FINDS...
IT TRULY BOGGLES THE MIND THAT SUCH POVERTY AND SQUALOR AS THIS CAN EXIST! AS I APPROACHED THE EARTH, I BECAME AWARE OF THE MANY SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE! WHY THEN IS IT THAT THE COMMON MAN MUST LIVE LIKE THIS?
FOR DAYS HE WALKS THE CITY STREETS, HORRIFIED BY ALL HE SEES... AND STRANGELY STARING FAR MORE THAN HE IS STARED AT...
DID YOU SEE THAT?
WHAT? THAT KID IN THE SILLY COSTUME?
BIG DEAL! KIDS NOWA-DAYS'LL DO ANYTHING TO GET ATTENTION!
THESE PEOPLE-- CROWDED TOGETHER LIKE CATTLE, RUSHING FRANTICALLY IN EVERY DIRECTION! AND NOT A SMILE UPON A SINGLE FACE I'VE SO FAR SEEN!
IF ONLY THERE WERE SOME WAY I COULD SPEAK TO ALL OF THEM, TELL THEM OF WHAT I LEARNED IN THAT OTHER DIM-ENSION! THERE IS TRULY NO NEED FOR THE WORLD TO BE IN THE SHAPE IT IS!
GOD BUT THIS WORLD REALLY STINKS! EVERY BIG DEAL I'VE COME CLOSE TO HAS SLIPPED RIGHT THROUGH MY FINGERS! MAYBE I OUGHTTA JUST PACK IT IN!


HE IS A THEATRICAL AGENT, AND CERTAINLY NOT THE BEST OF THE LOT, BEING DOWN ON HIS LUCK AS USUAL...
WELL, WELL, WHAT HAVE WE HERE? THAT'S THE BEST COSTUME I'VE SEEN IN YEARS! YOU'D BETTER HURRY UP, THOUGH, OR YOU'RE GONNA BE LATE!
PARDON? LATE FOR WHAT? I'M AFRAID I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND!
THE TOOTHPASTE COMMERCIAL THEY'RE AUDITIONING FOR AROUND THE CORNER! BUT YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT THAT, OF COURSE! AFTER ALL, YOU DIDN'T GET DRESSED UP IN THAT SILLY COSTUME FOR THE FUN OF IT, NOW DID YOU?
COSTUME? BUT THIS ISN'T A COSTUME! IT'S--
AUDITION
OKAY, OKAY! A SUIT! A UNIFORM! CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL! IT'S STILL THE BEST I'VE EVER SEEN!
LISTEN, KID--I'M GONNA GIVE YOU A BREAK! ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS MAKE ME YOUR MANAGER, AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET THE PART!
OF COURSE I'LL TAKE OUT MY TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT, WHICH IS THE USUAL AGENT'S FEE, BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THAT NOW!
BUT I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND! I'M--
UNDERSTAND? OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND! SO I'LL MAKE IT TWENTY PER CENT, OKAY? THE MAIN THING IS -- WITH MY HELP, YOU'LL BE A STAR! YOU'LL APPEAR BEFORE MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AS THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF KLENZO TOOTHPASTE!
WHAT?
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE! WHY THIS MAY BE JUST WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR! A WAY TO REACH AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE... A WAY TO ENLIGHTEN THE MASSES!
NOW, C'MON! WE DON'T WANT SOME OTHER BOZO TO GET THE PART BEFORE YOU EVEN GET A CHANCE TO SHOW 'EM YOUR STUFF, NOW DO WE?

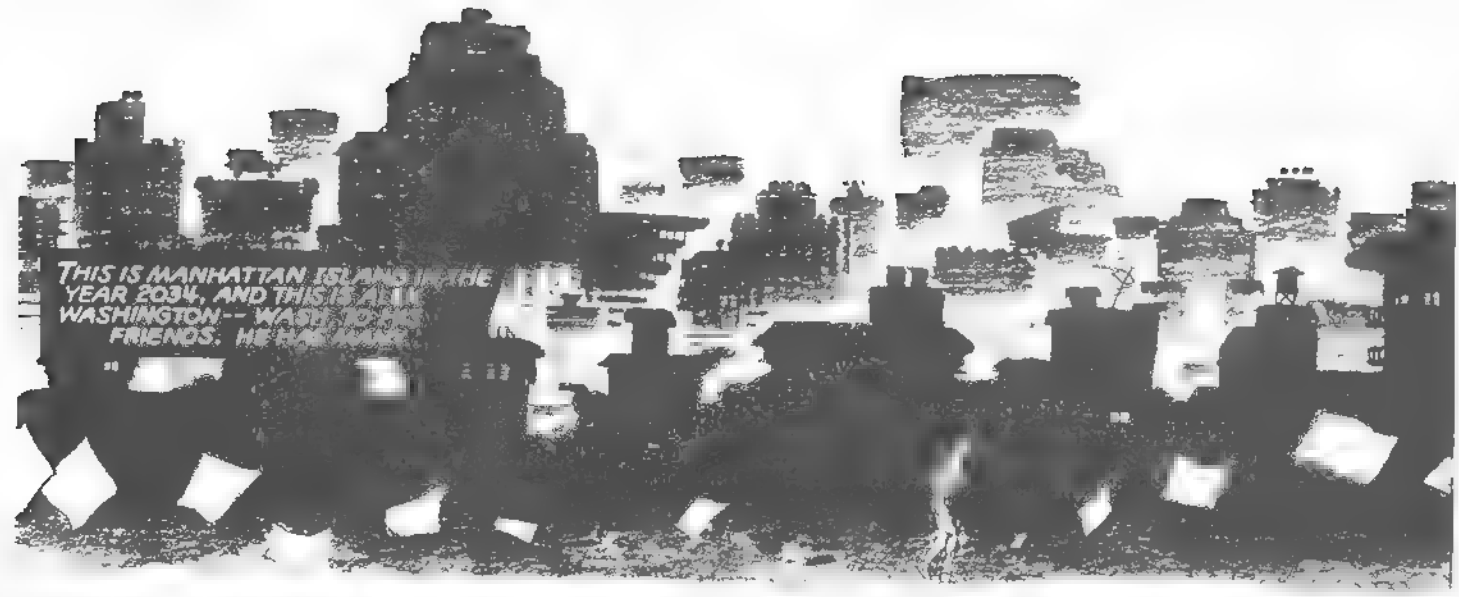

GOOD! THE AUDITION ISN'T OVER WITH YET! NOW JUST SHOVE YOUR WAY TOWARD THE FRONT!
HOW BIZARRE! A GROUP OF PEOPLE DRESSED UP AS THOUGH THEY WERE ME!
SO FAR, THE DIRECTOR HAS SEEN ENOUGH TEETH TO FILL THE MOUTH OF EVERY HEAD HE'S KNOWN... AND THEY'VE ALL BEEN RATHER DRAB... BUT NOW SUDDENLY ONE TOOTH STANDS OUT INCISIVELY...
WOW, THIS IS IT! SOMEBODY, TELL THE OTHERS TO GO HOME! I'VE FOUND MY BOY!
A CHANCE TO SPEAK TO MILLIONS.. I SUPPOSE I OUGHT TO START OUT BY GIVING THEM A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF WHAT THE SEVENTEEN UNIVERSAL AXIOMS ARE ALL ABOUT, AND THEN--
WHAT??
I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET YOU BLOW THIS ONE FOR ME! SAVE THAT PERSONAL INSIGHT STUFF FOR WHEN YOU MAKE IT TO THE TALK SHOWS!
TRY TO REMEMBER-- I'VE GOT AS MUCH AT STAKE IN THIS AS YOU DO!
YOU'D BETTER JUST FOLLOW THE SCRIPT THEY GAVE YOU, OR ELSE YOU'LL ANSWER TO ME! NOW GET OUT THERE! THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU!
GOOD LUCK, TOOTHY!
GEE, WHAT A CUTE LITTLE COSTUME! AND I'LL BET HE'S A CUTE LITTLE GUY ON THE INSIDE TOO!
WHETHER THEY THINK HE IS A MIDGET, A DWARF, OR WHATEVER, BENEATH HIS ENAMEL, THEY KNOW IN AN INSTANT THAT THEY HAVE FOUND A BIG STAR. PERHAPS IT IS HIS DESIRE TO CONVEY INSIGHTS; PERHAPS IT IS HIS FEELING THAT THERE IS GOODNESS IN MANKIND, SPILLING OVER INTO WHAT HE SAYS... BUT, IN ANY EVENT, AS HE FOLLOWS THE SCRIPT, HE MAKES EVERYONE FEEL THAT HE HONESTLY BELIEVES THAT KLENZO TOOTHPASTE IS THE GREATEST PRODUCT THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN!

CHARISMA -- THAT IS WHAT HE HAS! AND THE APPLAUSE FROM EVEN THE FEW TECHNICIANS PRESENT IS THUNDEROUS...
K-LENZO
WOW!
$
THEN...
MYRA! AS THE SCRIPT GIRL AROUND HERE, YOU UNDOUBTEDLY KNOW THIS AREA QUITE WELL. SO, WHY DON'T YOU SHOW MY LITTLE FRIEND AROUND?
MEANWHILE, I HAVE A FEW THINGS I WANNA TALK OVER WITH THE DIRECTOR!
AND WHAT HAVE WE HERE? CAN THIS, PERCHANCE, BE LOVE IN BLOOM?
YOU KNOW, UP CLOSE THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A COSTUME AT ALL! IT'S JUST SO PERFECT! IT MUST GET AWFULLY HOT IN THERE, THOUGH!
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT! THIS ISN'T A COSTUME! THIS IS THE REAL ME!
WHEW! THIS GUY IS WEIRD! BUT... SO WHAT?
THE WAY HE DELIVERED THAT STUPID SPIEL FOR THAT DREADFUL TOOTHPASTE -- HE'S CERTAINLY GOT WHAT IT TAKES! AND IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT--
I KNOW, I KNOW! YOU'RE WONDERING HOW I BECAME A TOOTH! BUT I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR THAT!
THERE'S SO MUCH ELSE I WANT TO TELL YOU... SO MUCH ELSE I HAVE TO TELL THE WORLD!
THE MINUTES FLY BY UNHEEDED, AS OUR HERO EXPLAINS BUT A FEW COSMIC TRUTHS... AND WHEN AT LAST THE COUPLE RETURNS...
WHERE HAVE YOU TWO BEEN?
HEY! HOWCUM MYRA'S HANGING OUT WITH THAT SHRIMP IN THE SILLY SUIT?

MOVE IT, LITTLE MAN! GO SLAP SOME POWDER ON YOUR FACE, THEN GET OUT THERE!
MYRA. IT'S REGGIE. I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
AND SO IT IS THAT WHILE THE TOOTH IS BEING MADE UP, SOMEONE ELSE IS GETTING THE BRUSH OFF...
ABOUT OUR DATE THIS FRIDAY NIGHT... YOU MIGHT AS WELL JUST FORGET ABOUT IT, REGGIE! IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO BE BOOKED UP SOLID FOR THE NEXT SEVENTEEN WEEKS AT LEAST!
LATER, AT A NEARBY BAR...
OF ALL THE-- I WAS CULTIVATING THAT BITCH! I FIGURED WITH HER CONNECTIONS SHE COULD HELP MY SAGGING ACTING CAREER! BUT NOW ALL THAT'S BEEN BLOWN... THANKS TO SOME LOUSY MIDGET IN A FREAKIN' TOOTH SUIT!
BUT, THOUGH ONE CAREER MAY HAVE BEEN SCUTTLED, ANOTHER IS UPON A METEORIC RISE... COMMERCIAL UPON COMMERCIAL IS PRODUCED... AND SUDDENLY A CERTAIN TOOTH IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN...
STAR
THIS IS AS SMOOTH AS I'VE EVER HAD IT! BUT I THINK WE'VE GONE ABOUT AS FAR AS WE CAN WITH COMMERCIALS! IT'S TIME NOW FOR US TO BRANCH OUT INTO OTHER ENDEAVORS... LIKE STARRING IN A BROADWAY PLAY! OR BETTER YET, A BIG-BUDGET HOLLYWOOD MOVIE!
DEEP UNDER THE GUMS
FRONT TEETH JUSTICE

BUT, THOUGH THE GLAD-HANDS MANAGER HAS HIS PLANS, THE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS HIMSELF HAS SOME WISHES OF HIS OWN...
WHEN AM I GOING TO GET TO TALK TO THE MASSES? YOU SAID YOU'D GET ME ON A TALK SHOW, BUT THAT WAS WELL OVER A MONTH AGO! AND STILL--
NOW, NOW! WE HAVE NO TIME FOR THAT STUFF NOW!
YOU'RE NOT A BIG ENOUGH STAR YET! YOU GOTTA BE IN A MOVIE OR SOMETHING FIRST! THEN, EVERYBODY WILL LISTEN TO YOU!
THAT NIGHT...
I'VE DECIDED! THIS IS IT, BABE! I'M GONNA BREAK IT TO HIM TOMORROW AT THE STUDIO! EITHER HE GETS ME ON A TALK SHOW--AND SOON--OR I'M WALKING!
A SUBTLE CHANGE HAS COME OVER THE TOOTH, FOR HE HAS LEARNED HOW BEST TO FUNCTION IN THIS STRANGE NEW WORLD... BUT HIS TRANSFORMATION HAS NOT BEEN COMPLETE ENOUGH TO ROB HIM OF HIS HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF ALL THAT IS ABOUT HIM...
SOMEONE LURKING NEARBY! HE'S--
WHA-?
QUICK, MY LOVE! GET OUT OF THE W-- UNNGH!
I'M GLAD I DID IT! HE DESERVED IT... FOR RUINING MY BIG CHANCE TO MAKE THE BIG TIME! BESIDES, HE WAS THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE WORST TOOTHPASTE THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN! PEOPLE OUGHT TO THANK ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE!
NO-OOOOOO...

WITHIN MOMENTS, THE STILLNESS OF THOSE EARLY MORNING HOURS IS SHATTERED BY THE PERSISTENT WAIL OF A POLICE SIREN... AS THE HEAD OF HOMICIDE RACES TO THE SCENE...
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS, LIEUTENANT! IT'S THE GUY FROM T.V.! I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS JUST SOME SORT OF A MIDGET IN A COSTUME! HE'S REALLY--
BUT SEE FOR YOURSELF! WE HADDA PUT A SHEET OVER HIM! IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE COULD KEEP A HUGE CROWD FROM GATHERING! HE'S PRETTY FAMOUS, YOU KNOW!
WELL, PERSONALLY, I DON'T CARE WHICH PRETTY BOY IT IS--HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU TRYING TO HAND ME SOME CRAP OR WHAT? THERE'S NO BODY HERE!
THERE WAS NOTHING UNDER THAT SHEET BUT THIS QUARTER!
WHAT? BUT... BUT...
...THE END OF THE ... DID HE TRULY DIE? ... QUESTIONS HAVE ... LEFT UNANSWERED BY ... STORY. BUT, PERHAPS, ... DAY, THE TOOTH WILL ... TURN! AND, PERHAPS, ... TIME, HE WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENLIGHTEN ALL OF MANKIND! THEN, AT LAST, WE WILL UNDERSTAND!
END


THIS IS MANHATTAN ISLAND IN THE YEAR 2034, AND THIS IS A TI
WASHINGTON -- WASH
FRIENDS. HE

HOME IS THIS DILAPIDATED APARTMENT BUILDING: NO BETTER, NO WORSE THAN MOST.

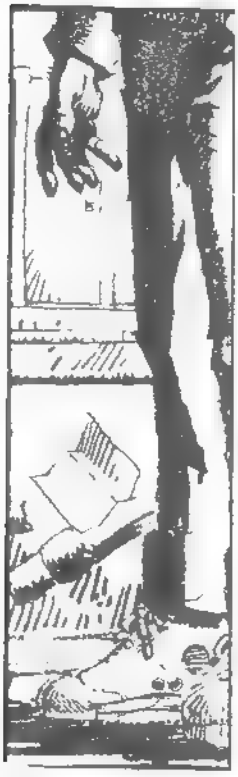
WASH HAS BEEN DOING DAY-WORK. THIS IS HARD TO GET, AND HARDER YET TO BEAR.

RIGHT NOW HIS MIND IS NOT ON HIS MISFORTUNE IN EMPLOYMENT, BUT ON GETTING INTO HIS APARTMENT SAFELY. THIS IS WHY HE HAS A GUN.

HIS MAILBOX HASN'T BEEN BROKEN INTO YET SINCE IT WAS REPAIRED TWO DAYS AGO. AND SO HE IS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE MAIL.

LUCKY.

LUCKY.



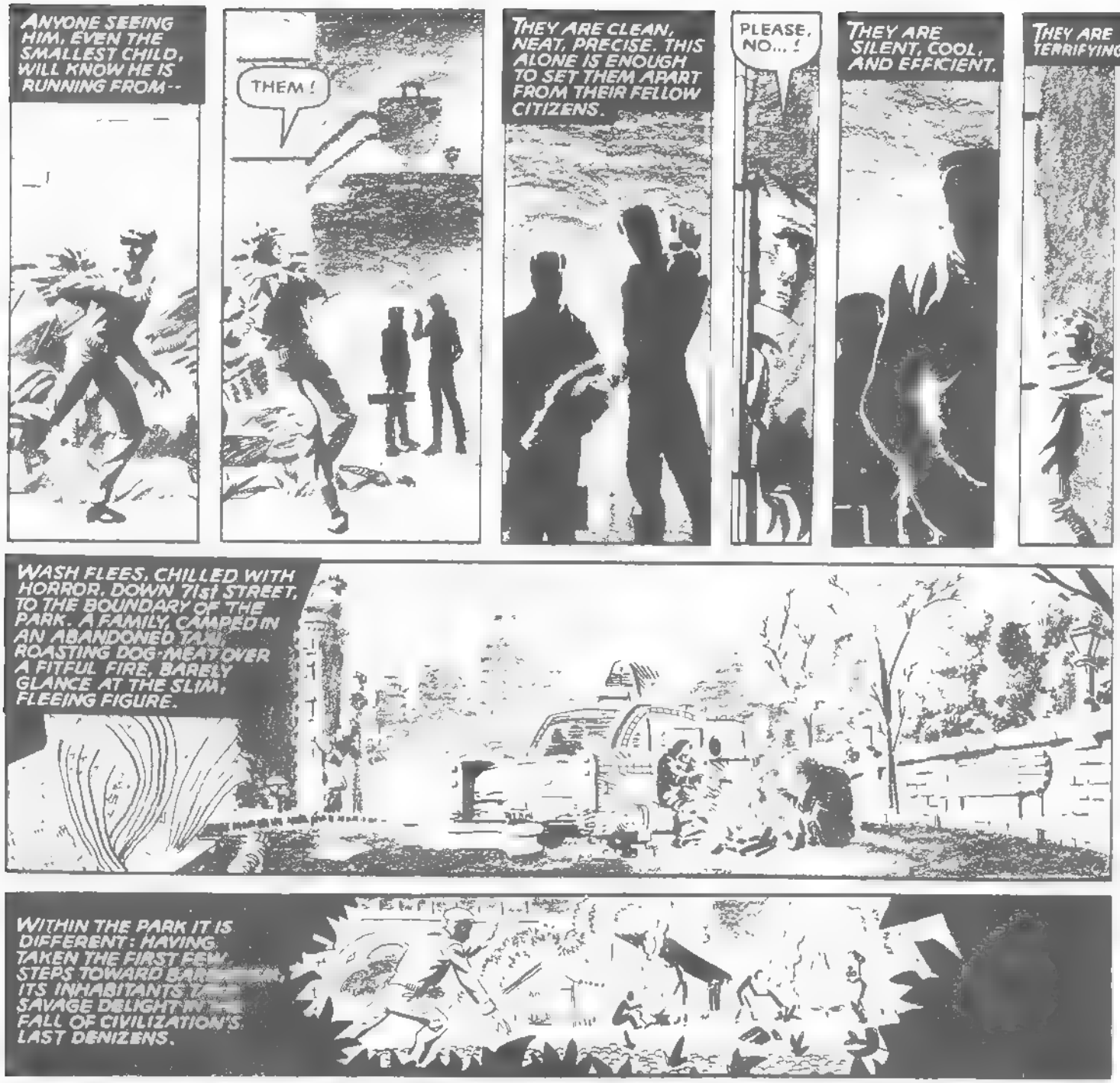
FOR SEVERAL WEEKS HIS MAILBOX HAS BEEN REGULARLY RANSACKED. BECAUSE OF THIS HE'D MISSED THE PREVIOUS WARNINGS.

NOW IT IS TOO LATE.

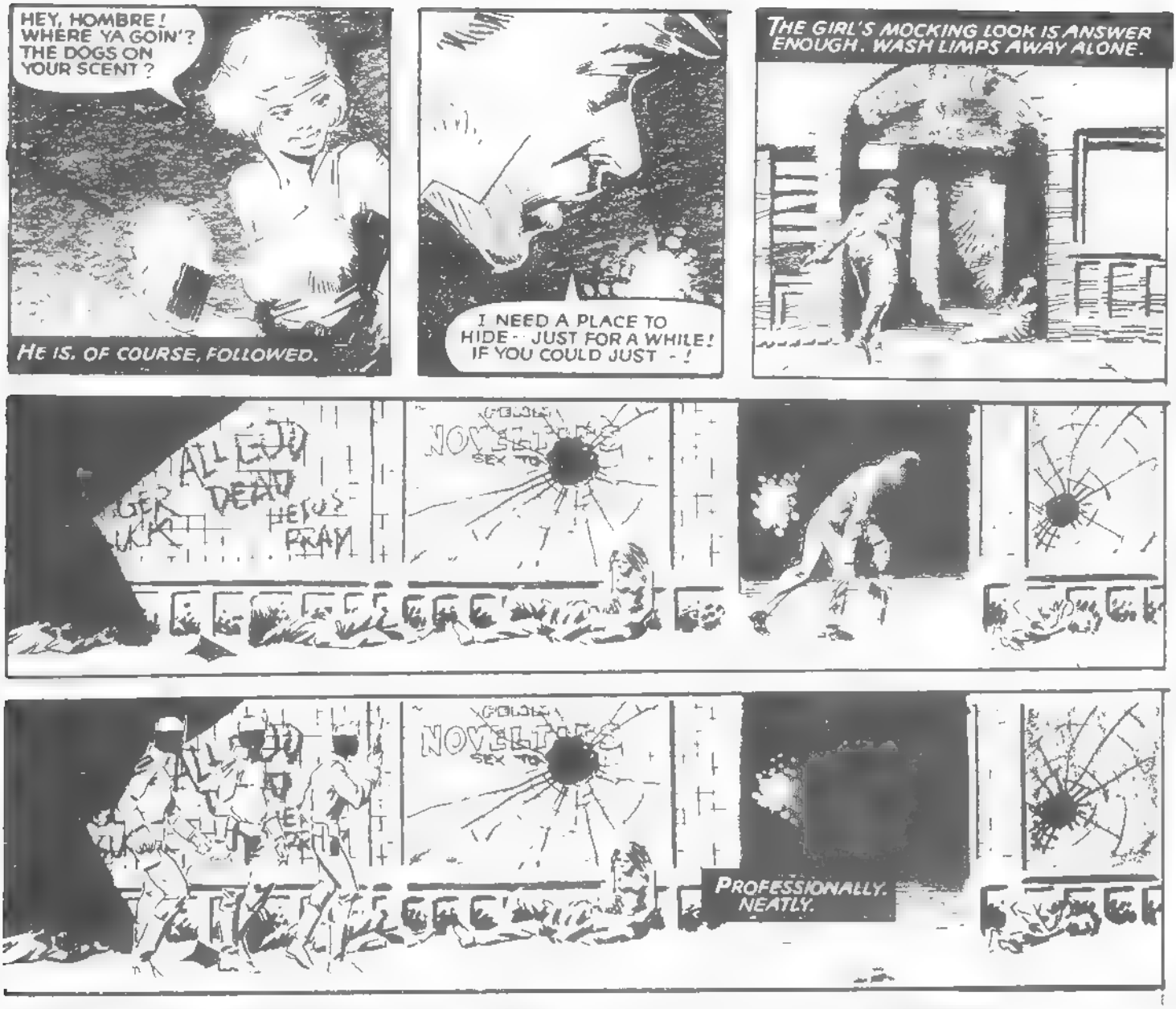
NOW WASH CAN ONLY RUN.

BUT CLEVERLY, HE MUST RUN WITHOUT APPEARING TO RUN.

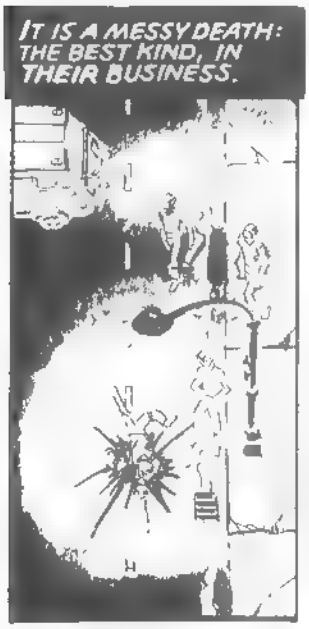
UNFORTUNATELY, WASH IS NOT A CUNNING MAN: HIS FEELINGS ARE VERY CLEARLY REFLECTED IN HIS FACE AND BODY.

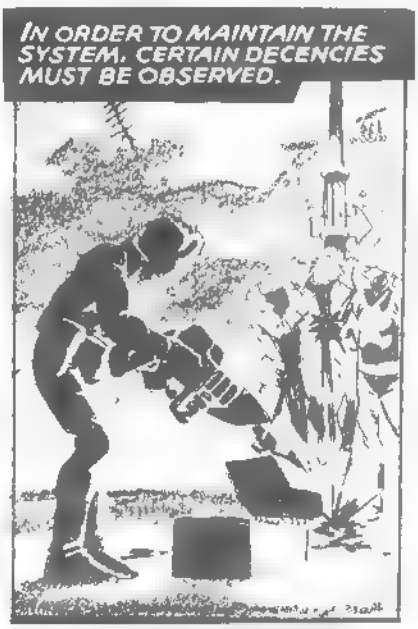

ANYONE SEEING HIM, EVEN THE SMALLEST CHILD, WILL KNOW HE IS RUNNING FROM--
THEM!
THEY ARE CLEAN, NEAT, PRECISE. THIS ALONE IS ENOUGH TO SET THEM APART FROM THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS.
PLEASE, NO...!
THEY ARE SILENT, COOL, AND EFFICIENT.
THEY ARE TERRIFYING.
WASH FLEES, CHILLED WITH HORROR, DOWN 71st STREET, TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE PARK. A FAMILY, CAMPED IN AN ABANDONED TAXI, ROASTING DOG-MEAT OVER A FITFUL FIRE, BARELY GLANCE AT THE SLIM, FLEEING FIGURE.
WITHIN THE PARK IT IS DIFFERENT: HAVING TAKEN THE FIRST FEW STEPS TOWARD BARBARISM, ITS INHABITANTS TAKE SAVAGE DELIGHT IN THE FALL OF CIVILIZATION'S LAST DENIZENS.
THEY SHOUT MOCKING ENCOURAGEMENT...
... AND CONTRIBUTE ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE FORM OF THROWN GARBAGE.
BEWILDERED AND FRIGHTENED, WASH RUNS THROUGH THE PARK...
...THINKING THAT ANY MOMENT HE'LL AWAKEN FROM THIS NIGHTMARE.
THE SUDDEN ASSAULT BY "MAN'S BEST FRIEND" SHOCKS WASH INTO ACTION.
KABLAM!

WASH LIMPS OUT OF THE PARK ONTO FIFTH AVENUE.
THIS BROAD BOULEVARD IS HOME TO MANY-- AND SANCTUARY TO NONE.
TO SHOW WEAKNESS IS TO INVITE ASSAULT. AND SO WASH SHOWS HIS GUN PROMINENTLY AND TRIES TO LOOK AS HARD AS HE CAN.
HIS FOLLOWERS TRAIL HIM PATIENTLY, COOLLY. THIS IS, AFTER ALL, ONLY A JOB.
THE LOST HAVE NO FEAR OF THEM: ONLY THOSE WITH HOPES OF RESPECTABILITY ARE IMPRESSED BY THEIR APPEARANCE. THE REST ARE INDIFFERENT. IT IS NO BUSINESS OF THEIRS.


HEY, HOMBRE! WHERE YA GOIN'? THE DOGS ON YOUR SCENT?
HE IS. OF COURSE, FOLLOWED.
I NEED A PLACE TO HIDE - - JUST FOR A WHILE! IF YOU COULD JUST - !
THE GIRL'S MOCKING LOOK IS ANSWER ENOUGH. WASH LIMPS AWAY ALONE.
ALL GOD DEAD
PROFESSIONALLY. NEATLY.
WASH HAS MANY FRIENDS. IT IS TO THE BEST OF THESE THAT HE FLEES.
POUNDING ON THE HEAVY, METAL REINFORCED DOOR, HE PRAYS (SOMETHING HE LEARNED AS A CHILD).
FOR A VERY LONG TIME THERE IS NO ANSWER. THEN--
FOR GOD S SAKE, WASH, GO AWAY!
DO YOU WANT TO KILL US TOO?
THERE S NOTHING WE CAN DO!
NOTHING! NOTHING!

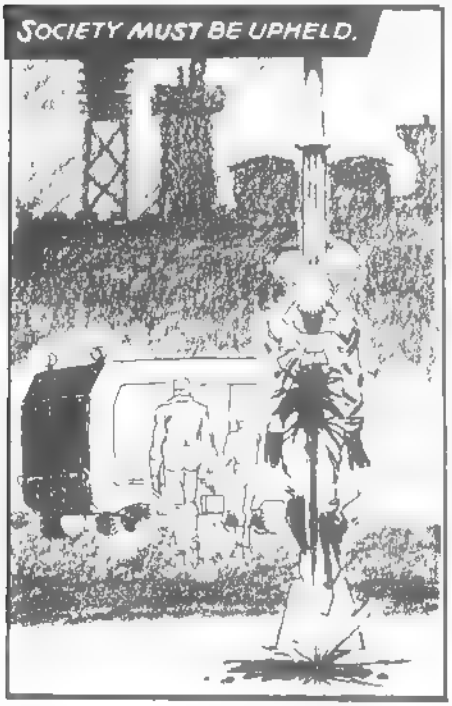
THEY'VE ALLOWED HIM TO RUN THIS FAR, FOR THIS LONG, SO THAT HE WILL SERVE AS A LESSON TO OTHERS.
THE LESSON IS OVER.
WE'LL GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE GO!
KNOWING IT IS HOPELESS, HE TURNS.
AND KNOWING IT IS USELESS, HE RUNS.
LIFE IS AN ENERGY THAT WANTS TO KEEP FLOWING.
WASH IS A MAN WHO WANTS TO GO ON.
AND THERE IS THE PAIN OF DEATH TO CONSIDER.
WHUMP
WHUMP
WHUMP

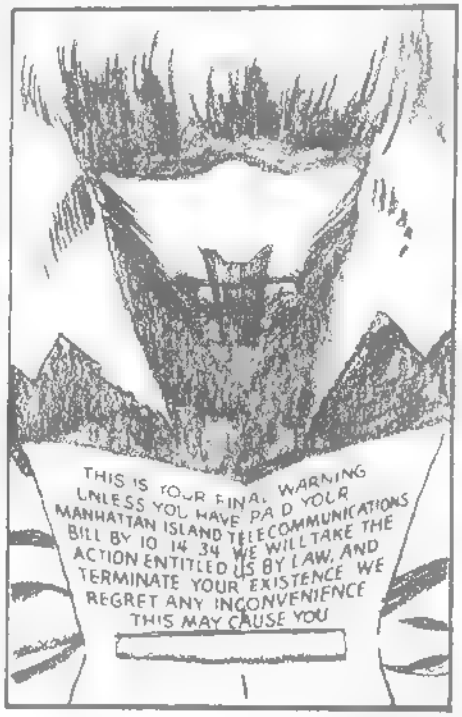




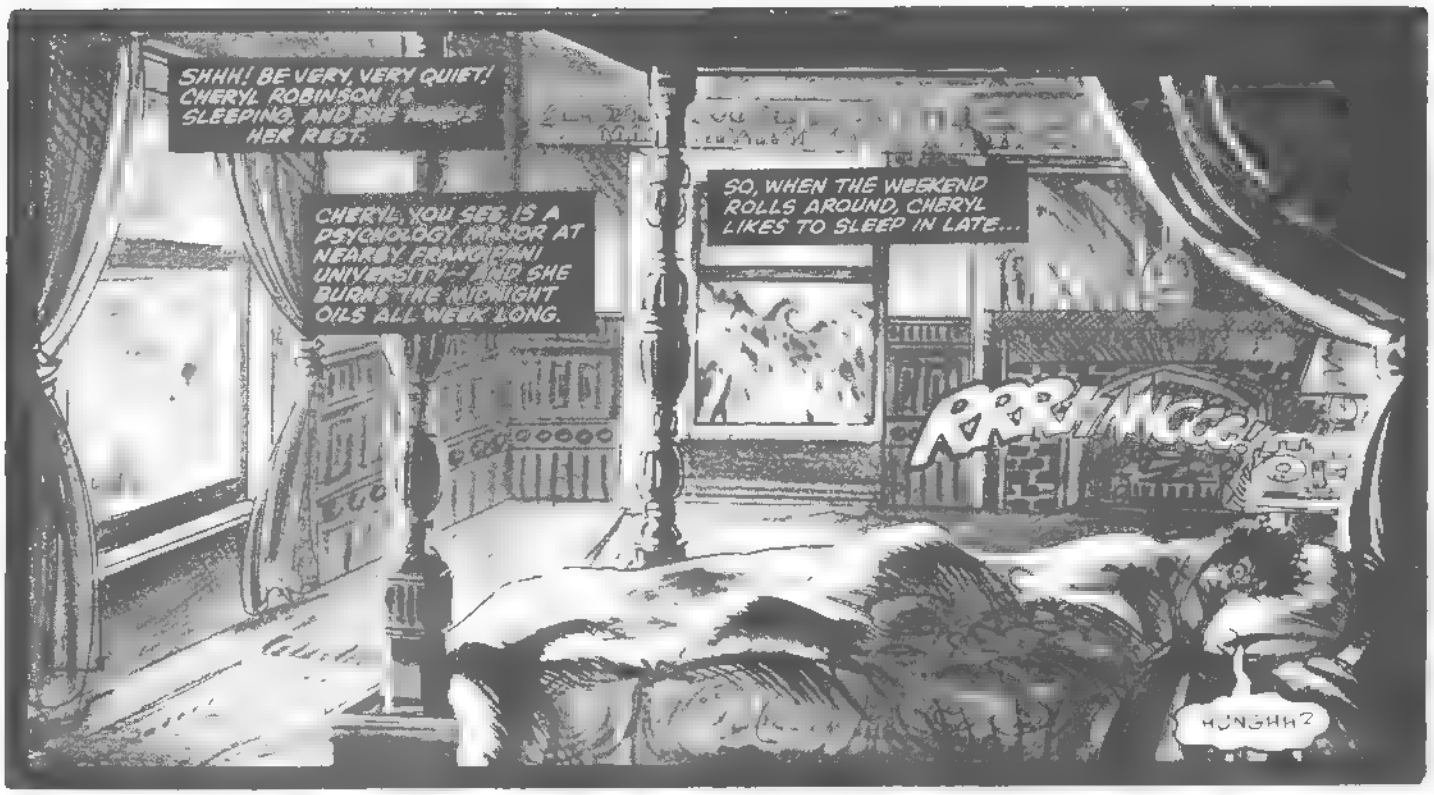
# KA-CHING

REALLY, IT IS SIMPLE.




THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING
UNLESS YOU HAVE PAID YOUR MANHATTAN ISLAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL BY 10 14 34 WE WILL TAKE THE ACTION ENTITLED US BY LAW, AND TERMINATE YOUR EXISTENCE WE REGRET ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS MAY CAUSE YOU

End.


SHHH! BE VERY, VERY QUIET! CHERYL ROBINSON IS SLEEPING, AND SHE NEEDS HER REST.
CHERYL, YOU SEE, IS A PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR AT NEARBY FRANCHONI UNIVERSITY -- AND SHE BURNS THE MIDNIGHT OILS ALL WEEK LONG.
SO, WHEN THE WEEKEND ROLLS AROUND, CHERYL LIKES TO SLEEP IN LATE...
RRRRIIINGGG!
HUNGHH?

OH WELL, YOU CAN'T WIN THEM ALL
HULLO?
CHERYL? THIS IS RUDY I NEED YOUR HELP RIGHT AWAY
WHAT TIME IS IT?
ABOUT 7A.M. I'M SORRY, KODO I KNOW HOW YOU LIKE TO SLEEP IN, BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT!
SIGH
OKAY RUDY GIVE ME A SECOND TO COMPOSE MYSELF, AND I'LL BE RIGHT.

# THE FANTASY GAMBIT

SAY WHAT?! HOW DID I GET HERE? RUDY, HOW DID YOU. WHAT ARE WE. OH, MY GOD! I-I'M NOT DRESSED FOR THIS!
OOPS!
GOSH, I'M SORRY, CHERYL -- BUT YOU DID SAY TO GIVE YOU JUST A SECOND. PLEASE DON'T FEEL SELF-CONSCIOUS NOBODY'S NOTICED YET HERE...
SNAT
YEAH THAT'S MORE LIKE IT. I DON'T KNOW THAT IT'S ANY MORE MODEST AN OUTFIT THAN YOU WERE WEARING -- BUT THEN, MODERN-DAY MORES HAVE NEVER BEEN THAT LOGICAL.
ANYWAY TO GET RIGHT TO THE POINT I'VE GOT THIS HEAVY PROBLEM.
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE A LOT MORE THAN A PROBLEM, IF YOU DON'T TELL ME HOW YOU BROUGHT ME HERE AND CHANGED MY CLOTHES IN A PUBLIC PLACE, I DON'T LET JUST ANYBODY DO THAT!
EASY CHERYL! TEEZ MELLOW OUT WILLYA?
I MEAN, YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT... NOT LIKE I DO I HAVE THIS. WELL, I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT THE POWER OF IMAGINITIVE THINKING.
YOU KNOW HOW I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS OVER-ACTIVE IMAGINATION!
?!?

PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS SAID "RUDY ONE OF THESE DAYS, YOUR IMAGINATION WILL RUN AWAY WITH YOU"
UH-HUH. I WAS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE
RIGHT WELL LAST NIGHT IT FINALLY HAPPENED.
SOMEHOW I'VE ACQUIRED THE ABILITY TO TURN MY SLIGHTEST FANTASIES INTO REALITY
I SEE IT BUT
BELIEVE IT IS HAPPENING
HIS SLIGHTEST WHIMS
-COME TRUE -IKE THAT
RICKETY-REE, RICKETY-RAT!
EXACTLY THANKS, GIRLS IT'S LIKE THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER, AND I'M ITS PRIZE PEARL
EYE EYE SIR
THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU, CHERYL THAT'S WHY I 'THOUGHT' YOU HERE. YOU'RE TAKING ABNORMAL PSYCHE-- YOU MUST KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT ALL THIS
YOU'VE GOTTA HELP ME. I FEEL SO LIGHTHEADED. I NEED SOMEONE TO HELP ME PULL MYSELF TOGETHER!

WE'LL HELP YOU, RUDY! HE-HE HEE!
RUDY!
RUDY!
OH, YES! LET US HELP YOU SOME MORE-- PLEASE! PLEASE!
FLORENCE, DIANA, MARY NO! I CAN'T TAKE ANYMORE OF YOUR... HELP!
SEE WHAT I MEAN, CHERYL? MY BASEST DESIRES ARE FULFILLED INSTANTLY! I'M SO ASHAMED
THAT'S SOME PROBLEM, ALL RIGHT COURSE, IT'S ONE THAT MOST FOLKS WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE.
H RUDY? JUST WHERE ARE WE? I DON'T KNOW THIS PLACE
IT'S AN OUTDOOR CAFE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE CAMPUS
AND YEAH I KNOW "THERE ISN'T AN OUTDOOR CAFE ON CAMPUS" WELL THIS MORNING I WAS THINKING HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF WE HAD ONE AND POOF! HERE IT
WHERE'S MY HEAD BEEN? RUDY, DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU HAVE?
YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE MIRACLES! YOU COULD MAKE THE WORLD RIGHT!
MAKE THE WORLD RIGHT? ME?
WITH YOUR POWER YOU COULD HEAL THE SICK WIPE OUT DISEASE AND POVERTY
HEY YEAH
YOU COULD BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD!
YEA, VERILY!

THOU HAST DONE ME A GREAT SERVICE, CHERYL! THOU HAST GIVEN ME MY GOAL
I MUST GO FORTH AND SAVE MANKIND! HOSANNA-HEY, SANNA! RAMA-LAMA DING-DONG!
OH, NO! WHAT HAVE I DONE?
RUDY COME BACK HERE!
OH THIS IS AWFUL--
-I'VE GIVEN HIM SOME SORT OF MESSIAH COMPLEX! I HAVE TO STOP HIM BE FORE HE CROSSES SOMEBODY!
W TH HIS IMAGINATION HE LL BE MARTYRED BEFORE LUNCH!
RUDY, WAIT A MINUTE! YOU CAN T JUST JUMP INTO THIS SAVIOR TRIP! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS
DANGER DOTH NOT BOTHER ME K DDO. I GET ALONG FINE
THOU HAST TO PUT THY BEST FOOT FORWARD, THAT'S ALL!
BUT WHAT IF THE POWER DOESN T ALWAYS WORK?
HUH? I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT!
AND THE INSTANT HE DOUBTS, RUDY'S FIRM FOOTING ON THE WATERS SURFACE, FLOWS AWAY!
SPLOOSH

RUDY ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
:KOFF: YEAH! BUT THIS DID TEACH ME A LESSON-- SAVING THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH FOR ME
DON'T BE SO DOWN RUDY! SURELY YOU CAN USE THE POWER FOR SOME GOOD!
TELL ME HOW!
LOWER TUITION
RAISE I.Q.S!
GET ME A DATE FOR TO-NIGHT!
I THINK WE'RE ASKING THE WRONG PEOPLE RUDY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. OH, THE WORLD IS JUST TOO ABSURD AT TIMES!
ABSURD?
CHERYL, THAT'S THE MAGIC WORD!
THE WORLD IS ABSURD.. BUT NOT TOO ABSURD: IN FACT IT'S NOT ABSURD ENOUGH!
THAT... THAT IS THE ULTIMATE ANSWER! IF I MUST BE ANYTHING... LET ME BE ABSUROMAN!
AND, AS HE SHOUTS THE WORD, RUDY'S BIZARRE POWER OF IMAGINATION SEEMS TO HOLD HIM TRANS-FIXED--
--AS ARCANE ENERGIES RIPPLE ACROSS HIS FORM, STRENGTHENING AND REINFORCING IT! AND THEN...
I'M READY

LOOK OUT, WORLD! HERE COMES...
ABSURDMAN!
WITH THE SHINY HAT AND SKIN-TIGHT COAT, AND COSMIC CHUCKLE IN HIS THROAT!
CAN YA DIG IT? I'M GONNA MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR ABSURDITY!
NICE HAT, HUH?
I'LL SAY! IT'S SO SHINY, I CAN SEE MYSELF! BUT JUST WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I'LL EXPLAIN!
C'MERE MIKEY! UP BOY!
COMIN BOSS!
COME ON, ALL YOU PEOPLE NOW, AN' GATHER 'ROUND I'M GONNA GIVE YA THE WORD GONNA SING A SONG AND MAKE IT SNAPPY YOW SUH
SUDDENLY, DARKNESS FILLS THE SKIES, AS A MAMMOTH ARENA FORMS AROUND THE DUO.
MY FRIENDS THE WORLD CAN BE A REAL DOWNER AT TIMES. BUT FOR NOW IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT. STILL IT DOESN'T HAVE TO KEEP YOU DOWN! NOT AS LONG AS YOU HAVE YOUR FANTASIES!
'CAUSE FANTASY EXPANDS THE IMAGINATION AND RELAXES THE MIND; AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, REALITY IS SO MUCH EASIER TO HANDLE... RIGHT?
YEEA AHH!
FANTASY
SO LISTEN AND LISTEN GOOD! A LITTLE FANTASY -- A GOOD OLD COSMIC CREAM PIE-IN-THE-FACE WITH AN ABSURDIST MERINGUE -- WILL GET YOU THROUGH THE WORST OF DAYS!
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY IN CONTROL .. AND NOT MUCK UP SOMEONE ELSE'S FANTASY! THAT'S ALL!

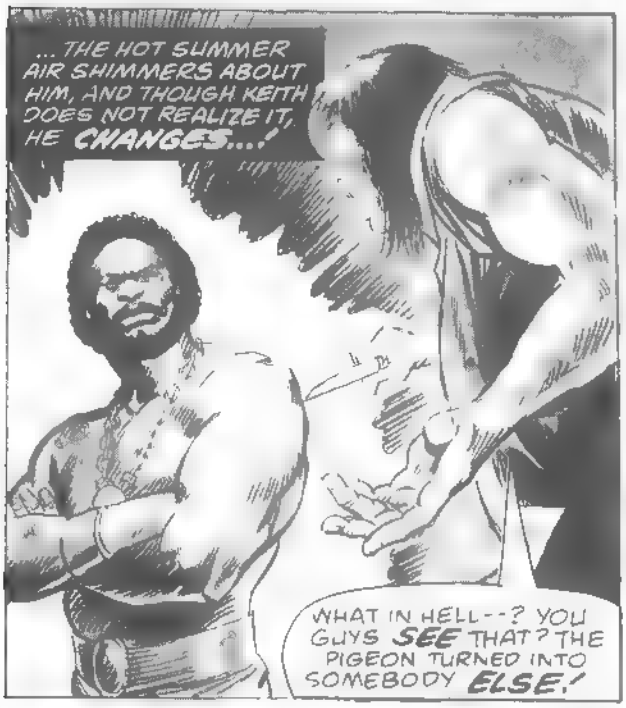
YOU SEE KIDDO? THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM FOR ALL OUT FANTASY IN AN ABSURD WORLD! THERE'S NO NEED TO RESTRICT IT TO YOUR DREAMS
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
WELL GOTTA GO NOW! AFTER ALL, WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES, HOO-HAH!
UP, UP.. AND OFF THE WALL
HE'S RIGHT! HE'S SO RIGHT! I SEE IT ALL NOW!
THE ANSWER HAS BEEN SO OBVIOUS.
RIGHT FROM THE..
..VERY START!

THE ABSURDITIES OF THE IMAGINATION ARE ALL THAT ANYONE REALLY NEEDS TO TRANSCEND REALITY!
I HAVE TO GET THIS DOWN ON TAPE WHILE IT'S STILL FRESH IN MY MIND
AND IN THE DREAM MY CHILDHOOD IMAGINARY FRIEND, RUDY, PROVIDED THE KEY TO THE ULTIMATE ANSWER
I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT IT WAS A DREAM FROM THE START...
I DON'T HAVE A PHONE BY MY BED, GET LOST YOU
THAT'S BETTER. NOW I CAN FINALLY GET SOME SLEEP
POOF
BE A DEAR AND TYPE UP THOSE NOTES AND TRY NOT TO MAKE TOO MUCH NOISE
YEW BETCHA, BOSS!
I WAS FOOLISH TO SUBLIMATE MY IMAGINATION, THROUGH 'RUDY' OR ANYTHING ELSE. THERE'S REALLY NO NEED .. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS LIE BACK AND ENJOY IT.
THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO DO TOMORROW.. AND IT'S GOING TO BE EVER SO MUCH FUN.
END?

THE WAY OF HEAVEN
"The Tao, the Way, flows everywhere. It is great, but — does not flaunt its — greatness; — That is why it is great." -Tao Te Ching
KEITH LONG WALKS THE STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY, AWED BY THE CONSTANT FLOW OF TRAFFIC, THE BUSTLING CROWDS, AND ABOVE ALL, THE SHINING SKYSCRAPERS, WHICH STAND LOOKING DOWN ON MORTALS.
WOW, THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING...! WE AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' LIKE THAT BACK IN OHIO!
AS HE STROLLS FURTHER DOWNTOWN THROUGH HIS LOWER EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD, KEITH DOES NOT NOTICE
HE KNOWS ONLY THAT HE HAS AT LAST MADE IT TO THE BIG APPLE, NEW YORK CITY ITSELF...
...AND THOUGH HE STILL DOES NOT PERCEIVE THE FILTH AROUND HIM, KEITH SUDDENLY BECOMES AWARE OF--
--DANGER.!
THERE'S A PIGEON! LET'S TAKE 'IM.!
UH OH

Script MIKE BARR Art GENE COLAN & JOHN TARTAG

C'MON, YOU GUYS LEAVE ME ALONE! I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY
YOU BETTER HOPE THAT'S NOT TRUE, MAN--
--OR WE MIGHT HAVE T'CUT YA OUT OF FRUSTRATION!
THEY OVERTAKE HIM RAPIDLY, AND KEITH BEGINS TO PRAY THAT HE WILL COME OUT OF THIS INCIDENT ALIVE, WHEN SUDDENLY..


...THE HOT SUMMER AIR SHIMMERS ABOUT HIM, AND THOUGH KEITH DOES NOT REALIZE IT, HE CHANGES...!
WHAT IN HELL--? YOU GUYS SEE THAT? THE PIGEON TURNED INTO SOMEBODY ELSE!

ME TOO, MARIO!
I DON'T KNOW WHY THOSE GUYS RAN AWAY, BUT I'M SURE NOT GONNA ASK THEM!
GANGWAY I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE!
"He who knows the Way is like an infant. Insects and scorpions will not sting him. Wild animals will not attack him."
--Tao Te Ching

AND AS KEITH ENTERS HIS APARTMENT BUILDING...
YOU! THE WAY IS STRONG IN YOU!
"THE WAY"? IS THAT ANYTHING LIKE THE FORCE"?
SORRY LADY, I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR 'STAR WARS' RIGHT NOW! I WAS ALMOST MUGGED OUT THERE!

I KNOW! I SAW THE MUGGERS RUN AWAY!.. I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THAT WITH YOU PLEASE, COME IN.! MY NAME IS NANCY LING!
UH, SURE, NANCY MY NAME IS LONG-- KEITH LONG
PLEASE, SIT DOWN WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PEPSI?
SORRY.
TEA'LL BE FINE.
TELL ME, KEITH HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A BOOK CALLED THE TAO TE CHING?
NO... I SLEPT THROUGH MOST OF MY COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY COURSES!
I SEE! THE TAO IS AN ANCIENT BOOK OF CHINESE WISDOM, WRITTEN BY A MAN NAMED LAO TSU IN THE SIXTH CENTURY, B.C. LISTEN.
"A GENUINELY GOOD MAN IS NOT AWARE HE IS GOOD; HIS GOODNESS IS REAL. AN EVIL MAN TRIES TO BE GOOD, BUT CANNOT."
I BELIEVE THAT IS YOU KEITH-- A GOOD MAN, PROTECTED BY THE WAY, BY THE TAO
THOSE MUGGERS COULDN'T HURT YOU, EVEN THOUGH THEY WANTED TO, FOR YOU ARE IN HARMONY WITH "THE WAY"
NANCY, BUT THIS IS ALL GREEK TO ME-- I'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IT, THOUGH
AND I WOULD LIKE TO TEACH YOU, KEITH
OKAY
THEIR HANDS MEET, AND BOTH KEITH AND NANCY KNOW THAT WHATEVER ELSE MAY COME FROM THIS MEETING, THEY HAVE EACH FOUND A FRIEND..

... AND PERHAPS FAR, FAR MORE!
YOU'LL NEED A COPY OF THE TAO FOR YOUR OWN, KEITH I KNOW A STORE THAT'S OPEN UNTIL ELEVEN
THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TAO"? ANYTHING YOU SAY, TEACH!
THEY BANTER, FEELING THEIR WAY ALONG IN THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP...
...UNAWARE THAT THEY ARE BEING WATCHED!
SOMETHIN STRANGE ABOUT THAT GUY THE WAY HE SCARED US OFF JUST NOW
THEY'RE LEAVIN' GIVES ME SOME TIME TO GET TO THE BOTTOM O' THIS
I DUNNO HOW I FIND OUT WHAT'S SO WEIRD ABOUT THAT GUY
BUT I KNOW SOMEBODY WHO WILL!
WHO? GO AWAY! LEAVE ME ALONE OR I'LL HURT YOU, I'LL KILL YOU! LEAVE ME ALONE..
PLEASE?
SHUDDUP PRUNE FACE! NEIGHBORHOOD SAYS YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT MAGIC N ALL SORTS O' WEIRD STUFF!
GOT ME A WEIRDO I WANT YOU TO TAKE CARE OF! DO A GOOD JOB...
AN I MIGHT LET YOU LIVE!

LATER THAT NIGHT, ON THE STREET, KEITH IS AGAIN THREATENED.
BUT THIS TIME, THE THR[illegible] IS NOT TO HIS [illegible] BUT TO HIS SOUL!
HEY, WHAT TH--?
DO IT WOMAN NOW!
THE HAG TEETERS FORWARD... MUMBLING IN A VOICE TOO LOW TO HEAR--
-- AND POURING ON KEITH BITS OF DUST AND MATTER BETTER LEFT UNNAMED...
...THERE IS PSYCHIC PAIN, LIKE A HOLE TORN IN KEITH'S SOUL...
...FOR A MOMENT, A GLISTENING AURA APPEARS AROUND KEITH -- THEN AROUND MARIO...
I CAN FEEL IT, MAN! I GOT THE POWER, NOW!
...AND THE GANGLEADER'S DELIGHTED SHOUTS FILL THE AIR!
ALL PRESENT WATCH MARIO AS HE RUNS OFF INTO THE NIGHT...
...IGNORING A STRANGELY-ALTERED KEITH!
HAHAHAHA!
COME BACK HERE, YOU SCUM
BEFORE I KILL YOU!
AGHHH
FACE GREETS ASPHALT WITH A THICK, PULPY SMACK, AND BLOOD MINGLES WITH DROPLETS OF RAIN.
[illegible] VIOLENCE PUNK SEE HOW YOU LIKE THIS!
ARRR!
[illegible] AND [illegible] SHATTERING INTO SHARDS! THE MAN FALLS... UNCONSCIOUS.
KEITH HITS HIM AGAIN, JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT!

KEITH, WAIT! WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHIN'S WRONG, BABY-- NOTHIN' A LITTLE VIOLENCE WON'T FIX!
THAT WOMAN DID SOMETHING TO YOU, KEITH TO YOUR TAO! LISTEN TO ME, PLEASE!
I DO FEEL A LITTLE STRANGE -
"He who has lost the Way Is lost himself." --Tao Te Ching
--BUT I'LL BE FINE -- AFTER I KILL MARIO!
AND UNDER THE HARSH STREETLIGHTS, BLOOD GLISTENS ON KEITH'S HANDS!
MEANWHILE, A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...
HERE COME A COUPLA' PIGEONS! THE POWER'LL MAKE ME LOOK HARMLESS TO 'EM - TILL I OFF 'EM
AND MARIO IS CORRECT... THE POWER OF KEITH'S USURPED TAO IS WORKING... THOUGH NOT QUITE IN THE WAY HE THINKS!
FOR THE "COUPLA' PIGEONS" MARIO STALKS ARE ACTUALLY A PAIR OF STREET THUGS, EVERY BIT AS RUTHLESS AS HIMSELF!
HEY- DIG WHAT'S COMIN', BOBO!
I SEE IT, MAX!
A RICH TOURIST SEEIN' TH' SIGHTS!
WHAT SAY WE GIVE OURSELVES A TOUR, MAX OF HIS WALLET?!
SOUNDS LIKE LOTSA FOCKS, BOBO!
IT'S WORKIN'! THOSE OLDSTERS ARE LETTIN' ME WALK RIGHT UP TO 'EM! MARIO, SON, THIS IS YOUR LUCKY DAY!

AWRIGHT GRAMPS, LET'S HAVE YOUR CASH BEFORE I-- HUH?
ATTACKIN' ME? OKAY, FOLKS, IT'S YOUR FUNERAL!
THIS IS WHAT MARIO SEES-- BUT HE DOES NOT REALIZE THAT KEITH'S STOLEN AURA MAKES HIS FELLOW HOODS SEE & HEAR HIM...
...IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LIGHT!
BEWARE, HOODLUMS! I HAVE STUDIED BOXING UNDER THE MARQUIS OF QUEENSBURY RULES!
SUITS US, DUDE! COME AN' GET IT!
THUS, AS ONE CONFLICT IS STAGED...
OOOOOH...
"Weapons are tools of fear, All followers of the way avoid them." Tao Te Ching
ANOTHER CONFLICT, LESS OBVIOUS, BUT FAR MORE CRUCIAL ALSO CLIMAXES!
KEITH-- NOTHING GOOD WILL COME OF THIS, PLEASE, COME WITH ME!
I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE ME ALONE, YOU STUPID BITCH! AND IF WORDS DON'T WORK--
--MAYBE THIS WILL!
HIS BLOOD-STAINED HAND RISES TO DELIVER THE BLOW THAT WILL FOREVER SEPARATE HIM FROM THE WAY!
...BUT THE NEXT INSTANT, ANOTHER BLOW FALLS, IN ITS PLACE... AND A MAN IS SEPARATED FROM HIS LIFE!
AARGGH!
"A man of violence will die of violence." --Tao Te Ching

AND THE MOMENT THAT MARIO DIES... THE POWER OF THE STOLEN TAO RETURNS HOME!
MY GOD... WHAT'S GOING ON?
AND ELSEWHERE, VERMIN SCURRY INTO THE DARKNESS... THEIR NUMBER LESSENED BY ONE!
THAT GUY WAS REALLY MARIO! WE KNIFED MARIO!
YOU STAY HERE AND TELL THE COPS, THEN, BABY! I'M MAKIN' TRACKS!
Whatever goes against the Way will not long endure. --Tao Te Ching
I--I CAN'T EVEN TRY TO EXPLAIN IT, NANCY... IT WAS ME, BUT IT WASN'T... I...
DON'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH IT, KEITH! THE WAY IS STRONG IN YOU AGAIN!
... AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS!
"The woman overcomes the male with quietness and stillness." --Tao Te Ching
THE YOUNG LOVERS RETURN TO THEIR APARTMENT BUILDING, STILL UNAWARE THEY ARE BEING WATCHED...
...THIS TIME BY A GNARLED FIGURE WHO KNEW THAT ALL WOULD END AS IT MUST... WHO KNEW THAT KEITH'S TAO WOULD NOT, COULD NOT BE SEPARATED FROM HIM FOR LONG...
...AND SO, SHE DEPARTS, SECURE IN THE BELIEF THAT THE UNIVERSE IS IN BALANCE ONCE AGAIN!
"When the Way rules the world There is Peace. When the Way does not rule There is War. The true Way is impartial Always favoring good men. This is the true Way," The Way of Heaven. --Tao Te Ching
END

*Hi there, people!*

*I'm Roger Stern, and — evidently because I've been answering the MARVEL PREVIEW letters pages for the past couple of issues — Lynn Graeme, your friendly neighborhood editor, decided that my face should grace this page.*

*Funny, I didn't know this was a horror issue!*

*Anyway, what do you say we cut into the old mailbag and see what people were saying about issue #21, featuring MOON KNIGHT!*

Dear Doug, Bill, and Tom:

I was keen on Moon Knight in WEREWOLF BY NIGHT... I loved him in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT and DEFENDERS... but I am 'over the moon' about MARVEL PREVIEW #21!

True, the 'disillusioned government agent' bit is a little overused these days, but after all, it's not so much the background of the character itself that's important, as where you go from there! The multiple-identity aspect of Moon Knight is what sets him apart from all the other costumed detective-types (with the exception of the Shadow, maybe). I admit to being a little confused about just which identity is the genuine one... if any! However, that was doubtlessly your intention. The relationship between Marc/Jake/Steven and Marlene will hopefully remain intact in the forthcoming MOON KNIGHT color comic.

The scope of the story was certainly vast. We covered the U.S., Canada, and France in the hunt for a the grisly perpetrator of the mind experiment. (A similar experiment recently appeared in Doug's MASTER OF KUNG FU, performed by Fu Manchu. Coincidence?) The fast action kept up the old interest, and the dialogue was very natural and flowing.

I look forward to more of the same in Moon Knight's new monthly comic. We don't see enough of Doug's talents in the four-color world. Don't forget to show us a bit more of Marlene's background. Samuels, too, is a bit of an enigma. how much does he know? How did he come to work for Marc/Jake/Steven?

Finally, artwise, Bill Sienkiewicz and Tom Palmer make a fine team. The final result may not be as desirable as Sienkiewicz and McLeod, but doubtlessly experiments will be made with other inkers in the future.

Dale L. Coe
41 Whitecross Road
Warrington, Cheshire
England WA5 1LR

Dear Lynn,

MARVEL PREVIEW #21 was, to be brief, terrific! Both "Mind Thieves" and "Walk a Crooked Mile" were great yarns... and even Ralph and Rog's feature articles were entertaining in their coverage of Moon Knight's and the Shroud's respective pasts.

It's no wonder that Moon Knight is slated to get his own book! I'll be remembering the fight scenes in "Mind Thieves" for a long time to come. Charles LeBlanc was one of those villains you love to hate. And even the supporting cast regulars of the MOON KNIGHT crew got their moments to shine this issue. Nice.

I must say that Steve Ditko is the perfect artist for the SHROUD! He perfectly captures that feeling of mysterious suspense needed for a strip like this. Cat and Mouse made a great pair of allies/assistants for the Shroud. And if the Crooked Man wasn't my favorite of Marvel villains, at the very least he served well as a tool in the machinery of the Shroud's new method of operations. If Mark Gruenwald and/or Steven Grant can develop this "war within the underworld" theme more, I could almost see the Shroud getting his own title.

Charles D. Haskell
15 West 139th Street
New York, NY 10037

**While there are no plans in the works for a SHROUD series just yet, our self-styled Master of Darkness has made an appearance in MARVEL TEAM-UP. And, if the demand is great enough... well, one never knows!**

Dear Lynn,

Issue #21 of MARVEL PREVIEW — featuring MOON KNIGHT — was nothing short of terrific. The story and art was beautiful, and fit so well together. Take a bow, Doug & Bill, you deserve it!

The back-up story featuring the Shroud was very good, too. I have only two very small gripes. One deals with the art. Steve, I like your art, but SPIDER-MAN is where it belongs. Secondly, *vis-a-vis* the villain... the Crooked Man? Come on, Mark... Steven... both of you! I love your writing, but the *Crooked Man?!* Sheesh!

Marco Patino
4732 Garrick Avenue
Pico Rivera, CA 90660

**Have no fear, Marco. After reading your letter, we sentenced Messrs. Gruenwald and Grant to each walk a crooked mile!**

**That'll teach 'em!**

Dear Doug, Bill, and Tom:

WAIT-A-MINNIT!

Just what is this with Marlene? One month in THE HULK! magazine she's

ripped up with a hatchet — nearly dying — and next month in MARVEL PREVIEW she's fit enough to understudy for *Enter the Dragon!* And with *no scars!*

That's some trick, people. I thought that Moon Knight's milieu was a bit more grimly realistic than the usual comics fare.

Be more careful. (Otherwise, the story was very, very fine!)

Randal L. Trimmer
4484 South Granby Court
Aurora, CO 80015

**Careful?**

**Well, we always try to be, Rand. Sometimes we hit, sometimes we miss... but we always try!**

**And that's why we didn't say just *when* "Mind Thieves" took place. But since — as you pointed out — Marlene had no scars showing, we'd hazard a guess that the story took place *before* the Hatchet Man stories in Moon Knight's HULK! magazine strip.**

**(Aren't we sneaky?)**

Dear Lynn,

MOON KNIGHT was excellent throughout. There's really nothing more I can say. I love Sienkiewicz's art; Moench's story makes this hero unique and refreshing; and there you have it. Oh, one thing... the villains may be dead, but keep in mind that a roomful of women saw MK without his mask.

The SHROUD has a great concept behind it, making for yet another unique-in-his-own-right character. The writing was good, though not exceptional, and it was perhaps a bit simplistic. That's just a general impresssion I can't really defend; sorry if I'm being unfair. I also can't accept a big crime boss pulling a job personally and unmasked. Something here that should also be kept in mind for the future: remember that the Sub-Mariner was once of the impression that the Shroud was insane!

As to Steve Ditko's art... oh, dear. I hate to say this, because I respect him as one of the greats of comics... but I just don't like most of his work. He does beautiful magic effects, as in DOCTOR STRANGE, and he does good work when it comes to shading, as in the SHROUD (which, admittedly, makes him somewhat more suited to this strip than to others). However, I just can't accept his people. The trend now in comics is towards greater realism in the art. I don't mean to say that realism is the only way to go. Howard Chaykin has done some wonderfully expressionistic work, for example.

To return to the point, I'm afriad Ditko's art just doesn't work for me anymore, like Kirby's, and (look out) Stan Lee's writing. Pioneers, great in their day, but the state of the art has progressed, and they haven't. Jesse Owens is no longer the fastest man alive, but it has nothing to do with his age. The Jesse Owens of 1936 could not compete with today's runners. Classics remain forever, but they can't be continually repeated without change. Mark Twain, were he writing today — on today's subject matter, but in his styly — would not produce bestsellers (and possibly not great art). Same, I fear, for Stan Lee, and for the art of Ditko and Kirby.

Anyway, if I get shot down for this opinion by hordes of readers, good. If Ditko is pleasing multitudes, good. I apologize for extrapolating from *my* dislikes. And even if his followers are in the minority, they deserve to see what they want! I suspect that if someone else penciled the SHROUD and Ditko inked it, that might work well, because he does handle that shading so well!

Robin Kincaid
7 Wall Street
Coventry, CT 06238

**Well, Robin, as a long-time fan of Ditko, Kirby, Lee, *and* Twain, I'm of course in personal disagreement with you. But I do have to thank you for qualifying your dislikes and being open-minded enough to acknowledge the 'rights' of Ditko-lovers to get a generous helping of Steve's art. Well-mannered critiques are always appreciated!**

Dear Marvel,

The cover of MARVEL PREVIEW #21 was one of the most impressive I've ever seen on any Marvel magazine. Whoever was responsible for its design has a defintie understanding of aesthetics. The lack of cover blurbs served to highlight the beautiful painting of Moon Knight in action, and that said a lot more than any words could have.

Inside, the stories and art were also much to my liking. The full-length MOON KNIGHT story allowed Doug to do things with the character that he hadn't been able to before...such as playing up his very bizarre multi-identity existence. It's an intriguing concept, and just one of the reasons why this character is so interesting.

Other reasons include the great supporting characters. Marlene and Frenchie are both being developed quite well, and they are an important, integral part of this series.

As for the story itself, it was brutal, frightening, and every bit as off-beat and strange as the Moon Knight himself. It was further complemented by the fine artwork of Sienkiewicz and Palmer.

In its own way, the SHROUD tale was no less unusual or enjoyable. While Steve Ditko's art is just the opposite of Sienkiewicz's tight, realistic work, it was indeed pleasing. Steve has an understanding of linework, shading, and the use of black and white which is displayed at its best in Marvel's non-color magazine format. I grew up reading Stan and Steve's SPIDER-MAN, so his art has always held a very special place in my heart. I thought it meshed well with Gruenwald and Grant's story, and I hope we see more of this character in the future. The SHROUD has considerable potential.

Kevin C. McConnell
118 Main Avenue
Warren, PA 16365

**And then, there are people with more basic tastes...**

Dear Guys,

What I liked best about PREVIEW #21 was the Makungas on the cover!

Linda
Queens, New York

**That's great, Linda. Any fan of Makungas is all right in our book!**

**And with that bit of esoterica, we'll bid you *adieu* for another issue... and not before reminding you to send your bouquets and brickbacks on this issue's selection of BIZARRE ADVENTURES to:**

**PREVIEW REVIEW**
**c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP**
**575 MADISON AVENUE**
**NEW YORK, NY 10022**